THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE

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"THE IMPERFECT ANGEL," "THE LESSON OF A DILEMMA," ETC.

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The Spirit under the Old Dispensation

THE SPIRIT UNDER THE OLD DISPENSATION

For the Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.—JOHN vii. 39.

We did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given.—ACTS xix. 2, R.V.

FOR the coming of the Spirit no less than for the advent of the redeeming Son, there was a predetermined fitness and fulness of the times that could not very well be anticipated and forestalled. The student who looks through the pages of Old Testament Scripture for any clear or pronounced indication of Trinitarian doctrine, lacks all just sense of perspective and proportion, and ventures upon a method of argument that is inverted, strained, artificial. The new views we are compelled to accept about the slow upgrowth of the human race into speech, knowledge, and civilisation make it impossible for us to conceive that primitive man, however free from the taint of barbarism, was a metaphysical theologian who would have been at home in the councils of Nicæa, Chalcedon, or Constantinople. His innocence did not imply advanced or elaborate knowledge, and we shall prepare for ourselves and the Church a great humiliation in the eyes of our better informed contemporaries, if we lightly assume that the primitive religious beliefs of mankind comprehended an insight into the great Triune mystery.

We shall not need, however, to guard ourselves against

pitfalls by a survey of the findings of modern anthropology, if we give due weight to the statements of the inspired writers themselves. John himself intimates that the Spirit and its evangelical ministry were destined to follow upon the life, death, resurrection, and enthronement of the Lord Jesus. The gift of the Spirit was a distinction reserved for the golden years covered by Christ's mediatorial reign. Whilst John the Baptist taught his converts to expect at Christ's hands a baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, he was unable to formulate very clearly a doctrine of the Spirit or to define the law of His work and the marks of His mighty movement in the hearts of men. Some of John's followers at Ephesus who were under legal rather than evangelical economies were quite perplexed when asked "if they had received the Holy Ghost." The best of those who are dominated by ideas of ritual, routine, outward service, cannot know and believe the truth about this Pentecostal gift. It was more especially to attest the honour and authority of the risen and exalted Christ that the Spirit came and rested upon men.

A slight survey of the Old Testament Scriptures will show in what sense John speaks when he declares the gift of the Spirit dates only from the Christian Pentecost. In many passages the name is apparently used as a synonym for the force, genius, occult essence of the divine nature, rather than to denote a person commissioned to high ministries in the souls of men. Often the name seems reserved to denote that part of the conception of God which the Jewish mind succeeded in disentangling from the anthropomorphisms inherent in the crude, scanty speech of primitive man, if not indeed inseparable from the necessary limitations of his early intellectual development. The Spirit is not so much

the instrument for the comfort and regeneration of human souls as the agent in works of creation and providence, the inspiring genius of the tabernacle ritual and ornamentation, the director in the rule and organisation of the state. He communicates the qualities of God's natural attributes rather than interprets and conveys to the souls of men the spell of God's sanctity and high spiritual excellence. We see the Divine Spirit brooding over chaos, sent forth to renew the face of the earth, qualifying the artist whose consecrated skill was to adorn the tabernacle, firing the courage and nerving to superhuman feats the sinews of Samson, resting upon leaders, kings, and prime ministers and equipping them for their theocratic tasks, opening the eyes of prophets to visions of the future. He came to selected men in virtue of their office, and not to all the children of Abraham as their common inheritance. He came unsought and by the sovereign decree of God, and not in answer to common prayers and expectations quickened in the people by a series of promises. Sometimes He opened rifts of spiritual illumination in men with whom, because of their cupidity and rebelliousness, He could not tarry as a power of lifelong sanctification, such as Balaam, Saul, and the unfaithful prophet who perished at Bethel. It was His special function in those days to inform the understanding of prophets rather than to teach, admonish, and consecrate the whole congregation. He dealt with the masses intermediately through priests, leaders, institutions, and not by any very direct, vivid, personal touch upon their lives. No wonder, with such precedents before them, those baptized only with John's baptism had little conception of their Christian privilege, if indeed they had any kind of faith in the personality of the Holy Ghost.

And yet, even in the Old Testament, we are reminded of

the fact that there is a normal operation of the Spirit of God upon the universal conscience of man. In one of the earliest records incorporated into the Book of Genesis it is implied that under the most depraved conditions of society the Spirit of God sets Himself to oppose and rebuke and resist the masterful and widespread sensuality and corruption of human life. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Judgment must come in and put a term to the insult done to His gentleness and longsuffering. David's prayer after his sin, "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," recognises not only an official inspiration, but the energising act of God's Spirit upon his personal conscience which threatened for the moment to cease. And a later psalmist implores this sacred inward ethical guidance. "Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." And yet the vast majority of men in those days must have failed to recognise as the very voice and presence of the Spirit of God these monitions that made themselves felt from time to time within the soul. Of the true source of these essentially moral functions performed by the unrevealed Spirit, the multitude continued in ignorance. They were unconscious of the stupendous dignity of that power which at times seemed to be working within them for rebuke and correction. The Spirit was present in a strictly limited degree of influence and as a veiled and undeclared visitant only. His subtle benefactions were for the most part anonymous. For many reasons He could not as yet come in the fulness of evangelical comfort and sanctification. There were rigid reservations in His shrouded ministry. The very prophets themselves began to feel and observe that, and the sense of it gave rise to those anticipations of the outpouring of the Spirit which seemed to fill almost as large a place in their thought as the

coming of the Messiah Himself. The work of the promised Spirit was necessary to the final victories of the Messiah. The Spirit, says the prophet Joel, in the Pentecostal text quoted by St. Peter, is to become a common endowment. It was to be freely given in all grades of life, and no longer restricted to kings, prophets, and reformers. "I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring," said the Most High by His servant Isaiah. And with the coming of the Spirit a new era of reconciliation and blessing was to dawn. "I will no more hide My face from them any more, for I have poured out My Spirit upon them."

Till the time of Christ's ascension into heaven, there was a reserve in the communication of this glorious gift, because *the Holy Ghost, no less than the eternal Father Himself, needed to be revealed by Jesus Christ.* That scheme of visible nature in which He had been brooding as an animating principle, could only illustrate in broken gleams His divine wisdom and power. When the genius of the artist, the courage of the patriot, the zeal, sagacity, and unselfishness of the statesman were traced back to the informing presence of a divine Spirit, the conception of His patience, holiness, and love implied was necessarily defective and inadequate. He was all but lost to the most exalted human perception in the impenetrable profound of the Godhead. Just as there are forms of life, translucent as the ocean in whose depths they move, which it is impossible to study till they have been brought up from the crystal abyss and put into suitable conditions and against a contrasted background; so this mysterious personality and the qualities attaching to it had scarcely been separable to human intelligence in its cruder stages from that all-comprehending Being in whose far off depths the Spirit had thought and felt and moved.

It was the prerogative of the Son in His incarnate life to give colour and visibility and knowableness to His matchless spiritual qualities, and to unveil His mysterious attributes by the same act in which He manifested the divine Fatherhood to men. The Holy Spirit was first seen in Christ as a Spirit of complete obedience, of all-devoting love, of filial assurance, of hope, of meekness, of triumphant strength; and it was only when thus seen that men could define and formulate their expectations of His person and coming and aims. Jesus Christ was the pattern of His mystic workmanship, and till men had seen one who was filled with the Spirit, their conceptions concerning Him were necessarily vague. Men must first learn to see the spiritual beauty of the Son of God before they could definitely desire the presence and power of that inner messenger from the Father who dwelt in Jesus Christ and reflected Himself in His sacred humanity. At an earlier period, it was scarcely possible for the Holy Spirit to have made for Himself a congenial home in the souls of men, even if there had been a sacrifice sufficiently efficacious to cleanse and consecrate those souls for their high destiny. It was after Jesus had been glorified that men began to confess the perfect excellence of His character, and to desire that noble baptism of which He Himself was both the subject and the appointed minister.

In the earlier communications of the Spirit there was restraint and reserve, because *the wisdom of the Father had determined that He should be given in all the perfection of His gracious offices only by the Son, and that in the exercise of the prerogatives of mediatorial sovereignty.* And did not that decree obviously express a stupendous principle of equity? Was it not fitting that the bestowment of this supreme gift upon men, which should make them partakers

of the divine nature, should link itself with the completion of the noblest moral act the history of the universe was to unfold? The Holy Ghost, with all His inexhaustible treasures of truth and comfort and power, could only be sent by One who, having redeemed men and tasted in their stead the unknown bitterness of death, had been raised to absolute and unchanging dominion. He could not be shed forth from a heaven in which there was no visible Mediator, or commissioned from a half-vacant throne which had not yet become the throne of both God and the Lamb. His blessed coming was to be a sign amongst men of Christ's glorious investiture at the right hand of the Father, an echo or refrain of the jubilations with which the conquering King was greeted in heaven after returning from His strange mission amongst men. He was to come to all the accessible ranges of human thought and life, a witness of the great coronation beyond the stars and a channel of its mystic gladness. A witness must not anticipate the event of which he is sent to testify. A herald must not go to and fro in his official character amongst the people till that which he is ordained to announce has come well within the horizon. To set aside that fundamental law of his vocation, would be to perplex, mislead, stultify, and to generate tempers of scepticism and suspicion. He cannot come forth to inspire and attest the great evangel till He has been authoritatively commissioned, and there must be the mediatorial enthronement before the charter of universal enfranchisement is entrusted to His hands. "Whom I will send unto you from the Father." He comes forth with a new vocation received from the lips of the Son, a vocation more magnificent in the range of its significance and the spheres of its glad accomplishment than He had heretofore received from

the Father when He was sent to inspire kings, prophets, and sweet singers of the old dispensation.

Again, *this reservation was intended to save men from pride and self-righteousness.* If the Pentecostal pleroma had been vouchsafed at a point in time not historically linked with the work of Christ upon earth, men might have found it difficult, if not impossible, to bring themselves into agreement with God's fixed conditions, by seeking through faith alone these surpassing benedictions of the Spirit. In the best and the noblest of the Old Testament saints, there was a residuum of legalism which unfitted them to take this vast endowment as a gift of God's sovereign grace. If the Paraclete, with His untold wealth of light and gladness and victory, had come to those of the old dispensation, they would have been under a peculiar temptation to look upon His ministry as an inherent right, an inalienable racial or family inheritance. They would have welcomed Him as a high witness to either their personal or national sanctity, a tribute-bearer from the skies come to pay homage to human excellence. He had come, they would have inferred, wooed, purchased, constrained by their alms and fastings, propitiated by their disciplines and reiterated supplications. The temper of self-righteousness needed to be dissipated by the rude spectacle of a holy nation perpetrating a crime without any parallel to its blackness. Men must see themselves in the manifold lights of the cross, assume the lowest posture of humiliation, consent to be cleansed by its despised Victim, and learn to associate every blessing worth possession with the name of the Nazarene. Till the Saviour's work had been consummated amongst men and before God, they could not connect this last gift of heaven with its true Giver. It was after His work had been finished and crowned, that they

came to apprehend, in this inner ministry of the Spirit to the soul, a fruit of Christ's unselfish pains and a free gift of His redemptive love. In Christ's sacrifice, a dispensation of grace was set up, and the manner and degree in which the Spirit was poured out had to be so adjusted as to accentuate that all-important truth.

There was a necessary reserve in the action of the Spirit under the old dispensation *because of the inadequate truths through which He had to work.* The ideas of divine things current among the best and the wisest of those early times were not commensurate with the changes he was to accomplish in human society. He was destined to cast out the desperate evils that had overshadowed past history, to sanctify the coarsest and the foulest natures, to recover murderers to the divine image, to turn rebels into devotees, outcast transgressors into saints, and to humanise and ennoble what was most brutal and depraved in human character; and He could not do this by wielding truths less stupendous than the soul-subduing and soul-renewing truths identified with the name and the cross and sceptre of Jesus Christ. Till the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of God in Christ had been brought within human horizons, till Christ had bled for men and risen again and passed to the right hand of the Majesty on high, the Spirit was straitened by the paltry thoughts, traditions, precedents of human life, as well as by the coldness and restriction inherent in the best types of human love. The Spirit of course reveals truth and commands light to shine out of darkness, but there are gradations in His methods. He works at the outset through the stock of pre-existing truths, and uses object-lessons to help His vast demonstrations. Truths must needs begin to take shape in the minds

of the men he is to use proportioned to His power, sanctity, resourcefulness. How could He permanently comfort and exalt men through the obscure and rudimentary typologies of Judaism? How could He achieve His culminating ministries of salvation through that limited repertory of doctrine and motive contained in the law and the prophets? You would not expect an engineer to build mile-long tubular or cantilever bridges, if he were put down on a continent poor in coal and iron, and inhabited by tribes ignorant of the art of smelting metals. He would bury himself, and throw genius, training, reputation away, if he were to settle in any such place. Under such conditions he must be a mere cipher. He can only come in the fulness of his genius where mineral wealth abounds, and a stage of civilisation has been reached in which it is possible to find skilled labour. The Spirit needs a magnificent series of truths to use if He is to be worthy of Himself and do the colossal work to which He is destined, and those truths necessarily identify themselves with the story of Christ's sacrifice of love and His succeeding enthronement.

There was a reserve in this gift of the Spirit under the old dispensation, because, till Christ ascended to the Father to receive His investiture, *the very people who were to become the Spirit's instruments had narrow and unworthy views of the range of God's saving purposes.* The elect disciples must conceive a grand programme for the larger humanity before the utmost energies of this new ally of the Church could be put forth. He cannot lend Himself, with all the manifold influences issuing from His life, to narrowness, insularity, selfishness. His divine powers can only expand to their just proportions and magnitudes in Christ Jesus and those who catch the fire of His world-embracing compassions.

The Spirit was to be given not only as a spring of personal gladness and sanctity, but as an inspiration of loving service for the vast world ransomed by Christ's death. Christ Himself hints that in the two temple utterances on which John comments, as well as in the close relation between the commission to His followers to disciple all nations, and the promise of the Holy Ghost. Christ not only pledges Himself to quench the individual thirst of the believer who comes to His feet, but to make the life He bestows upon that believer reach out in immeasurable benignity to others. In other words, Christ in the universality of His saving purpose must come and dwell in His people by the Spirit, and He could not very well do that till He had first lived before their eyes in the strange largeness of His redemptive charities. Nothing better than a divided and fragmentary Christ can dwell within those whose programme falls short of the recovery of universal man to truth and piety and blessedness. Now two things were needed to broaden the views and aspirations of God's people, so that the Holy Ghost could find in them instruments responsive to the greatness of His plans. The first thing was deliverance from prejudice, parochialism, racial spitefulness, and then a new-begotten sense of the vastness of the divine plans. In some of the evangelical prophets there had been gleams of insight into God's purpose towards the Gentiles, but the clear universality of the divine counsels of salvation could only be made known in Christ. That He should reign over the Gentiles was a manifest prerogative of His sovereignty, but that He should reign over them in love and not by terror could only be conceived by those in whom the passion of forgiveness and cosmopolitan charity had been kindled. To drink in the universal love of the cross was the only way

by which men could rise into harmony of purpose with the all-loving Spirit, and so become vehicles of His uttermost power.

It is ours to live under this most glorious dispensation of the Spirit. How much higher do we rise than the devout Jew in virtue of our pre-eminent privilege? Are our hearts purer and our lives more loyal to the divine commandment? Is evil completely cast out by the advent of this almighty force of sanctification into our natures? Have we that large-heartedness an infinitely loving Spirit must find in those through whom He works? Do we rise above the Old Testament standards? "What do we more than others"? In all spiritual endowment and possibility the Jew was a mere servant, or at most a minor bound hand and foot; we are King's children, invited to that liberty which the Spirit ever brings with His more immediate presence. Have *we* received the Holy Ghost since we believed? Are all His gifts daily stirred up within us? Have we that pleroma which is our very birthright under the new dispensation? or do we profess ourselves the heirs of the promise, and yet practically despise through the many years of our formal Christian service, a birthright that we may one day perchance vainly seek with tears?

II

The Spirit in the Son of Man

THE SPIRIT IN THE SON OF MAN

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek.—Isa. lxi. 1.

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God.—Luke i. 35.

For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.—John iii. 34.

How that God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good.—Acts x. 38.

Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God.—Heb. ix. 14.

The fact that Christ's earthly life became effectual through the ministry of the Holy Spirit within Him, and not alone through the inherent virtue and power He brought with Him from His pre-existent state, has become one of the commonplaces of theology; and yet how little do we realise its true import, and cultivate that humility and dependence of soul which would distinguish us if the great truth were ever in view! In spite of our formal adhesion to this doctrine, it seems still strange to us that one whom we think of as holy and divine should be indebted at every stage of His earthly life to that inward mystic ministry which is so necessary to us because of our sinfulness. We speak of the Holy Ghost as a Deliverer from inbred corruption, and are ready to assume, quite unwarrantably, that where there is no corruption in the nature, the stimulating forces and

fervours of His benign indwelling are needless. We are accustomed to look upon this ministry, which perpetuates in our souls the saving work of the Lord Jesus, as though it were a special antidote to human depravity only. For the Spirit to abide moment by moment with Jesus Christ, and work in His humanity, seems like painting the lily, gilding fine gold, and bleaching the untrampled snow.

But that is a mistaken view. When the universal Church shall have been built up and consecrated to its high uses, it will be "by the Spirit" that God will dwell in the temple. And the temple of Christ's sacred flesh needed this same indwelling presence. It was imperative that to the Son in His humiliation the Father should give the Spirit, and give Him, too, upon no grudging scale,—give Him for His own sake as well as for ours, whom He came to represent and to save. The great Sanctifier blends the essential forces of His personality into this divinest type of goodness, to show that goodness in even the only begotten Son is not self-originated. In the less mature stages of Christ's expanding humanity implicit and docile dependence on this inward leading was the test of His entire acceptability to the Father.

The early beginnings of this wonderful life were implanted in the virgin mother by an act of the Holy Ghost. In the annunciation to Mary, as well as in the vision of Joseph, not only is the supernatural conception declared, but the part of the Spirit in that mystery, about which it is almost impossible to speak, is defined and emphasised. Before the first stage of organic development had dawned, He so wrought and ruled, that the life fostered in this unique mother was protected against all the frailties of an earthly

lineage, and made fit to blend with that divine consciousness now or hereafter to be infused into it.

John the Baptist, the Lord's forerunner, was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb,—filled with Him as a Spirit of zeal and prophecy and exalted discernment rather than as a Spirit of assurance and filial fellowship; and through that Spirit he recognised from the very first the special character and destiny of his younger and greater kinsman. The Spirit was in John as a counteractive to latent evil in a normal nature, and as a helper to the stern consecrations of his career. But in the case of the One who was before the Baptist, the Spirit antedated the conception, and was present not as a competing, but as a creative and dominating force in the life.

Before we can begin to ask intelligent questions on this subject, perhaps we need to settle the unknown relations between matter and mind, and to determine, if indeed that were possible, the stage in the growth of a child at which intelligence first asserts itself. If the discernment of colours and an instinctive reaching out towards favourite scents may be observed in things that lie in the scale of vegetable life or scarcely rise above it, can we justify ourselves in holding it incredible that the Spirit of God touched the springs of motherhood in this most blessed of women, and brooded in the germ cell out of which sprang this incomparably holy life?

Is the connexion between matter and mind so intimate and indissoluble, that, for good or for evil, moral qualities cleave to all the organic substances which have been incorporated into human bodies? Did some sinister entail attach to the physical elements out of which Christ's humanity was to be built? and did these elements need to be cleansed and

dedicated by this holy and august ministry before they could become the fit habitation of a divine life? Does the sensibility which may determine great moral issues dawn in an unborn child, and was the Spirit necessary to inform with divine influence the faintest incipiencies of thought and feeling? Was this act of the Spirit required to guard the inscrutable beginnings of this divine life against the most minute infirmities of temper that might conceivably transmit themselves through an organic relation to an imperfect mother? Were the attributes of the eternal Son infused at once into this embryonic cell, and did the Spirit bear in His unseen wings the slumbering and upfolded personality of Him who had "emptied Himself," and implant its dormant seed in those elements which were to shape themselves into the God-Man of the after days?

Questions like these do not perhaps admit of an answer, but the miraculous conception reminds us that the absolutely perfect life must not only be begun, continued, and consummated in the Spirit, but anticipated likewise. So richly was the Spirit given to Christ that His holy influences were pulsing in those rudimentary stages of life which precede all signs of consciousness and moral responsibility.

The part of the Spirit in the conception as well as in all the after-work of Jesus Christ seems to suggest *that interdependence of persons in the holy and blessed Trinity*, about which we know so little, but which clearly preceded all the economies of human redemption. In the inscrutable relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit, there must have been an eternal reciprocity, a fellowship of thought, counsel, and mutual action, necessitated both by the unity of the Godhead as well as by the eternity of the divine love itself which otherwise could only date from the birth of creatures

destined to be objects of the divine love. These sacred names do not represent merely latent potentialities in the divine nature waiting for some crisis in human history before they can awake to consciousness and effective operation. In the eternal Godhead there was a co-relation of life scarcely suggested by the parallels of our rigidly defined human personalities. And the action of the Spirit in the miraculous dawn, and in the no less miraculous progress and meridian of Christ's earthly life, was the continuation of an influence which penetrated His consciousness and benignly wrought there prior to the incarnation.

The part fulfilled by the Spirit in Christ's humanity is further indicated by the fact, that *at the baptism in the river Jordan this august intermediary between the Father and the Son descended upon Him again*, assuming for the moment the passing form of the dove. The living symbol identified with this Pentecost which inaugurated Christ's official life was seen by Jesus and John, possibly also by a number of the spiritually fit who were present in the crowd. It was not enough for the Spirit thirty years before to convey the properties of a mystic divinity to those natural elements out of which the wonderful child was to be shaped. This Prophet and Deliverer who had come down from heaven could not be left to His own reviving recollections of the life passed in the Father's bosom, nor to the unconscious momentum of pre-existent experiences which might come to put a high stamp on His moods and habits of thought and act. With an eternity of glorious and blessed relationships behind Him, all fitting Him to attain some unknown ideal of spiritual perfection, the God-Man could not meet the duties and ordeals of His incarnate life in the strength of that majestic retrospect only. The dove-like form signifying

an inward visitation from the presence of the Father implied peace, tenderness, fidelity, holy and gentle fellowship. The messenger did not need to come to this obedient and undefiled Son as scorching fire, although it became fire when He in due time ministered the Spirit to sinful men. The Spirit came to bring new anointings and discernments and prerogatives to the humanity of Jesus Christ, to be a vehicle of fresh visions, fresh powers, fresh aptitudes, fresh vocations, which mighty things were by and by to pass from Christ to His disciples.

The Spirit came in this significant way to the Son of man as *an abiding guardian of His unspotted sanctity.* It was He who led up the newly baptized prophet to His temptation in the wilderness. Unlike Simon Peter, who, in the spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, challenged the dangers and difficulties of his ordeal, and fell woefully, the meek and holy Jesus did not vaunt His own strength, and met the forces of the adversary only when led to do so by this messenger from the Father. The Spirit was assured of the moral fitness of this lowly and obedient Man to meet the awful strain He was so soon to feel. The Spirit indicated that the moment fixed, in the counsels of the Father, for this supreme test had come. And the Spirit led Him to this critical conflict, comforting, equipping, and building Him up by the way. Angels might minister to His lower natural life when the conflict was overpast, but it must be the Spirit's unshared distinction to bring afresh into view those deep things of God by which His higher life must be sustained. The forces of evil, although far from infinite, are mighty in themselves, and appalling in their resources, and the holy Son can only venture to meet them in the pleroma of the Spirit. Fools that we are, we confront

temptation in a spirit of recklessness and presumption, not infrequently seeking temptation for ourselves, and madly defying its power without possessing any baptism from above, or any high fellowship of the Spirit. Christ consented to face it only when led and succoured by this divine companionship. The Spirit must be with Him in this testing time, for, in making known the Son, and persuading men of the virtue of His spotless sacrifice, He must search the deep things of the Son no less than of the Father, and watch His innermost thoughts through the crises of His destiny. Besides all that, the perfect virtues of Jesus Christ must be nurtured by this breath from heaven. The divine excellences of the Son of man needed an inner divine environment about them whilst unfolding in a world with the blight of sin upon it everywhere. There must still be some kind of reciprocity between the Son of man and the heaven He has left, if His graces are to lose none of their divineness whilst He is sojourning in realms of selfishness and corruption.

The Spirit seems to have been given as *some mysterious compensation to the act of self-emptying humility which preceded the incarnation.* Our Lord's inheritance of illimitable wisdom and power was not forfeited by that act, but put in the trust of another, and made over to Him again as the emergency arose in His life and work upon earth. He needed the loving counsel and vigilance of this attending presence, for He was stripped of the defences of His own former attributes. The Spirit was the loving and vigilant guardian of the priceless virtues and loyalties of the Son, and the excellence and perfection of that Son consisted in His ready heedfulness to this inward voice which interpreted the will of the Father to His human soul. God's Son had emptied Himself of His

eternal wisdom, and the Spirit was sent to guard against the hazards of that privation, and restore, by secret and subtle inspirations, that equality of wisdom with the Father which He had not seen fit to grasp. And the public and private teaching of Jesus Christ was the product of His implicit dependence on this inward counsellor. After He had been raised from the dead and outsoared the humiliations of His earthly lot, we are told that it was "by the power of the Holy Ghost that He gave commandment to His disciples." And that must have been still more significantly true of all that He spake while still present as one of themselves. The Father gave the word,—gave it by the continuous testimony and elucidation of the Spirit who dwelt within Him, and made Him a type of the elect Church of the future. There were realms of infinite knowledge which He once traversed at will, now needing to be unveiled afresh; and the Spirit was given to Him without measure in just and fitting proportion to those vast amplitudes of truth to be restored to His view by the holy and invisible companion of His incarnate life, and hereafter to be made free to the thought and quest of His disciples.

The Spirit seems to have been given to compensate for *that renunciation of power involved in the mystery of the incarnation*, and as an earnest of its coming restitution. The wonderful works accomplished by the Son of man took their rise, not so much in the superhuman qualities of His personality, as in the power of that Spirit with which He was anointed. Although there is no clearly developed doctrine of the Spirit in the older portions of the Old Testament writings, Isaiah at least in his day was made to see that the Messianic works of healing and deliverance and redemption would flow out of that anointing by the Spirit which should

single out the elect Servant of the Lord from His fellows. And Peter enforces the same thought in the household of Cornelius, declaring how that "God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." His own experiences in the Pentecost had taught Peter the secret of his Master's power. Perhaps the discovery had come to him through his own recent mastery over the pride and boastfulness of his nature, and may have helped to confirm him in his new habits of childlike trust upon another. In the days of his self-sufficiency, it would have been quite impossible for Peter to believe that He who had been supernaturally revealed as the very Son of God, and glorified by a strange transfiguration splendour that seemed to make Him the fellow of the Most High, should need to achieve His mighty works by leaning upon another. Could Peter have been told that his Master's marvellous gifts were held upon this tenure, he might have looked upon it as an affront to the divine dignity of his hero, and have exclaimed, as about the death of shame, "Be it far from Thee, Lord." Sometimes Christ's miracles are quoted as proofs of His divine nature. They are certainly proofs of His divine authority, but they illustrate the energies of this attending Spirit rather than the attributes of Christ's own proper personality. Christ cast out devils and opened prison doors and raised the dead, but it was by the power of the Holy Ghost alone. The tempter once tried to induce Him to work in His own strength, in the power of His inherent Godhead, so that He might undo and reverse the self-renouncing humility of His own incarnation, but in vain. All He did was in loyalty to this inward guide who made known to Him the will of the Father and gave Him power for His appointed tasks. Fools that

we are, we attempt much in our own strength, but the Son in His humiliation received back His infinite forces of life and dominion only through this divine messenger from the Father.

The Spirit came as a *Spirit of assurance to compensate for the glory the Lord had renounced*, and to be an effectual offset to those powers of wrath that seemed to be stirring within His troubled history. It breathed through His tender and confident invocations of the Father when He was despised and rejected of men and pointed out as a victim of fate and retributive displeasure. He needed the divine secret whispered by the Spirit to strengthen Him against the rash judgments of evil-minded contemporaries. He needed this sacred inward pledge to assure His sensitive nature through all the shame and darkness and blood of His tragic lot. The dove of peace, the symbol of the Father's accordant love, ever nestled within Him. It returned only with the return of the Son of man to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Its inward voice refuted that popular calumny of His mean place in the universe which seemed to be half proven by His burdened life. It was a permanent memento of the voice that once spake from the opened heavens, the voice of approval, of complacency, of acceptance. The Spirit, which heretofore may have seemed a part of His own consciousness, was henceforth discriminated in His own special aspects and relationships, a source of comfort, serenity, sustaining courage; and how much he must have needed its blessed ministries! Surely never were these ministries so welcome to the human breast! He could not be satisfied with a bygone memory of the Father's love, although He knew full well that love was from everlasting to everlasting; nor should we be satisfied without this

benign presence if we had learned the true love of God and made His high approval our life-breath. Each moment His moods needed to be kept sweet and gracious and His obedience steadfast and unwavering by this blessed inward testimony. With such daily contradictions to bear and such a cup and a baptism before Him, no fitful enjoyment of this supreme privilege could quiet and establish His heart and nerve His incomparably unselfish resolve. And the Father gave this Spirit of assurance and testimony to His one perfect Son most bountifully, for was there not an infinite complacency to be declared? There was no stint in either the Father's love or the Spirit's secret revelation of it to His heart. This Spirit of peace and filial gladness was given to Jesus without measure.

In the great act of sacrifice in which the life of the Son of man culminated, the presence and power of the Spirit are again revealed. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that it was by "the eternal Spirit Christ offered Himself without spot to God." The Spirit attended in that solemn mystery to inspire and energise the great motive principles of the transaction, and to bear His witness to the spotless perfection of the offering. He had been the constant channel through which the divine perfections flowed in perennial supply into this unblemished manhood. It had been His high distinction to nurture that absolute love and righteousness which were blent into this offering and vitalised its efficacy. The Spirit of all divine qualities was poured into his susceptible nature with infinite lavishness. A single self-seeking aim, a moment of boastfulness, of petulance, of embitterment, a murmuring thought at the vast demand of the divine righteousness, would have vitiated the sacrifice through which untold millions were to be ransomed.

The Spirit had helped to perfect Him in His human obedience, and helped its last redemptive act. It was through the faithful influences of this holy and unseen companion, that the work of salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ was crowned. In the darkest and most troubled moments of His earthly life, the Spirit had vouchsafed communications of the Father's love, and by this inward ministry of revelation the Son had been kept unchangeably true to the Father and the Father's appointed work. The fervour, the loyalty, the affluence of that perfect filial love which had been maintained within Him, gave an all-penetrating and all-comprehending virtue to the sacrifice of the cross. And, more than that, the Spirit was present as an eternal witness of this act of eternal redemption. He had searched the deepest motives out of which it took its rise. There were human witnesses of the outward tragedy, it is true, but the Spirit who had been the lifelong companion of Christ's deepest and most secret thoughts, was the one solitary witness of the infinite and eternal virtue which enforced and informed the sacrifice. This most pure and sensitive Spirit had never been for one moment disobeyed, grieved, or in any degree repelled. Just as an attendant waited upon the steps of the sacrificing priest, who scrutinised the victim to be placed upon the altar, and was a sponsor for its unblemished health; so the Spirit who had watched with unresting jealousy and vigilance over the life of the Son, mediated in His last offering, and in earth and in heaven became the sponsor for its spotlessness and soul-cleansing power.

The Spirit was given to Christ in this bounteous measure as the Head and Pattern of the new humanity. His fulness comprehended our need and the needs of all; and those who become true members of His body may find the same

Spirit in His manifold influences their daily and inalienable possession. We are "joint heirs with Christ," and that comprehends the privileges of His earthly as well as the royal splendours of His heavenly life. Perhaps even the miraculous conception itself, whilst putting the stamp of superhuman majesty upon Christ's personality, was typical of the operation of the Spirit upon the new humanity. May there not be a mystic gift for the seed of the covenant people, running on lower yet parallel lines? "I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring." On the one hand, we must be careful not to dogmatise where so little is known; and on the other, we must be jealous lest we should circumscribe the sphere of the Spirit's work. It may well be, that in undoing the work of sin and making us partakers of the fulness of Christ, the ministry of the Spirit is earlier than we apprehend. Possibly it may antedate the dawn of consciousness itself. True, moral blemishes soon appear in the children of the most devoted Christians, and it is a poor standard we reach at last who are heirs of the promises; yet the standard might be very much lower but for these counteractive influences that await the very germs of life. The omnipresent Spirit may actively operate in every part of our history and development. If we had a due sense of our privilege, we might so receive the Spirit as to be adequately equipped for every temptation. If our confidence were Christ alone, and we were hoping for nothing from ourselves, we might have the same clear uniform assurance that we are God's children which made bright and gladsome the saddest of all human histories. We, like our great Pattern, may go about doing good if we enjoy the same anointing which is our right through union with His Person. No service need

find us unprepared, for the gift is for us who trust in His name no less than for our holy Lord. Christ's humanity was expressly typical, and of His untold fulness may we receive. No gift of the Spirit lavished upon Him is denied to us, if we seek it for His sake alone, and as loyal and uncompromising servants of the divine counsels. The word spoken of Him may prove true of us;—"The Father giveth Him not the Spirit by measure."

What shame should overpower us when we remember that through large portions of our life we have walked in the self-sufficiency of the flesh, and at our very best have thought little of the Spirit and our dependence on His help! The taint of evil is in us, and yet how wantonly we have gone forth to meet temptation, whilst the Holy One of God needed the succour, guidance, and peculiar inspiration of the Spirit, before He dare turn a single step towards the wilderness of His conflict. Our natures are drained of the spiritual forces which once belonged to them; and yet how many duties we undertake without the baptism of power from on high, whilst He, mighty though He was in the forces of a miraculous personality, went to His work confiding like a child in the anointing and enablement of the Spirit. The only begotten Son, the incarnation of all wisdom, love, purity, and righteousness, was ever leaning upon Him who was the Interpreter of the Father's counsels and the channel for the communication of His divine power; and yet we dream that we can live useful lives, and leave the world better than we found it, without having this spring of sacred benignity within us. We are by nature children of wrath, and He came from the bosom of the Father's love; and yet we think it quite safe to live, and perhaps no great risk to die, without that Spirit of

assurance which He who never offended prized and possessed at all times. Such evil independence and self-sufficiency might almost rival that of Lucifer himself. O my soul, abase thyself for thy folly and pride! Confess thy need at all times and for all things, and God will meet it out of the riches that are in Christ Jesus. If the Spirit was given with such unstinted munificence to one who was perfect in Himself, how much more ungrudgingly will the pitiful Father give to those whom the Son has taken into discipleship, and whose needs are so deep and pressing and manifold, that same blessed Spirit of light and sanctity and peace!

III

The Spirit and the New Sense of Sin

THE SPIRIT AND THE NEW SENSE OF SIN

And when He is come, He shall reprove the world of sin.—JOHN xvi. 8, 9.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.—ACTS ii. 37.

JOHN THE BAPTIST, who foretold the gift of the Spirit, led on to faith in the Giver of the Spirit through the rebuke of sin, and terribly graphic, detailed, and scathing the rebuke was. This same order and succession of topic marks Christ's personal ministry in the synagogues of Galilee. "Repent and believe the gospel" were its two impressive watchwords. And this gradation in the ministry of Christ and His forerunner did but anticipate a corresponding gradation in the work of the Spirit. The Spirit could become the true Comforter of humanity only by first disclosing and rebuking its sin, and making a spurious peace give place to right and rational tempers of self-reproach. No man can rise to a worthy conception of the divine righteousness till his personal sin is clearly seen and frankly acknowledged. An unholy past deranges and vitiates all our noblest perceptions. If a man did not need to be made alive to the guilt of the past for the purposes of a righteous forgiveness, he would need to be made terribly alive to it for the ends of his own moral quickening and development. A man born and bred amongst cannibals could not have a high sense of

the sacredness of human life, and you would be slow to put him on a jury to try a case of culpable homicide. A Red Indian who had wandered over the unclaimed prairie would not be likely to understand our laws of land tenure or trespass, and you would hesitate to put him on a land commission. A man born and bred amongst pirates would not be likely to have very clear views of the sacredness of property, and you would be aghast if he were made a justice of the peace. To rectify a man's perceptions, you must not only take him away from the past and make him ashamed of it, but you must introduce him into new circles of law, usage, and public opinion, and show him through sharp, flashing contrasts, how degrading were the traditions by which he once guided himself. We are all more or less unbalanced by our evil antecedents, and accurate moral discernment can come into play only after we have passed through ordeals of shame and self-accusation. As we turn the corner in our recovery from the disease and prostration of sin, the first sign of hope is that, seeing in the mirror of encircling truth and revelation the Spirit has set up how loathsome sin has made us, we hide our face for shame.

Confucius is said to have once exclaimed, in an outburst of despondency, "It is all over! I have not yet seen one who could perceive his fault and inwardly accuse himself." Confucius is not alone in that verdict upon human nature. The lament is suggestive. It implies the enormous difficulty of bringing an average man to admit his fault. It implies also that, with his many virtues and excellences, Confucius did not achieve a character of such ideal perfection, that his contemporaries felt themselves smitten with shame by his transcendent example. And it implies that the common conscience needs to be reinforced

with supernatural influence and vitality before it can assert itself and compel confession and repentance.

It is all but impossible to argue the world into a frank and unreserved acknowledgment of its follies and misdemeanours. The most horrible offences which have ever blotted and befouled the history of mankind find ingenious apologists. At this very hour men will write to the newspapers to defend with sociological sophistries every vice that saps and smirches our national life. It is not often they will confess the fallibility of the nation, the party, the confederacy to which they belong, and it is a much tougher task to bring them to admit that personally they are no better than they ought to be. Some scientific faddist has been trying to prove that the sun, whose hot rays turn some parts of the earth into a burning desolation, is as cold as an icicle, and that the heat it is supposed to give off arises from a chemical change in the earth's atmosphere. It would be a far easier thing to bring men to believe that physical paradox than to get them to admit that any spark of the hell-fire that frets and wastes and torments society has come out of their cool, dispassionate, well-regulated souls. Where the Spirit of God does not work in the fulness of His power, true moral discernment is wanting. You might as well make a colour-blind man judge at a flower-show, as accept from one who has not the Spirit of God a verdict upon questions of morals not already determined by statute law or public opinion. Till the Spirit gives the foundation premiss upon which the superstructure is to be raised, no true logic of conduct is possible. He begins where human dialectic falters and fails. To convince of sin is a work of supreme difficulty worthy of the Spirit's matchless light and wisdom and resource.

So many forces militate against the work of the Spirit in convincing the world of sin, that the wonder is we should come to see any dawning humility, reproach, and self-accusation in human nature at all.

The instinctive pride of human nature is arrayed against this first task of the Comforter. The man who, born to wealth, lands himself in an unhappy bankruptcy is rarely able to adapt himself to a life of straitened circumstance. He will think he has the right to ride behind horses, to be waited on, and to drink the best wines, to the end of his days, although he may never redeem his fortunes. His habits cling to him, and he goes upon the assumption that once a merchant prince, always a prince. A fallen king can rarely reconcile himself to the position of a mere subject. Poor plaything of chance though he is, he looks upon his hereditary rights as interminable, and claims from his followers on the tossing sea, or in the mountain cave or island prison to which his conquerors have banished him, the deference he had claimed when the head of a brilliant court. And so with human nature. It seems to possess some faint hereditary consciousness of its own high birth. It has some pathetic and indefinable reminiscence of the position to which it was designated in the beginning. The reverence of children and the honour of neighbours are demanded as rights. We prepare to visit our wrath, in milder ways than Haman of course, upon the stubborn Mordecais who neglect to pay us homage. It is supposed to be a preliminary condition of politics, commerce, literature, that a certain standard of mutual respect and courtesy shall be maintained. The Bible, too, seems to give its sanction to this code of etiquette; for, in spite of all it has to say about the depravity of human nature, it enforces the universal

honour of man as man. Can we be content to honour ourselves less than it is claimed others must honour us? We surely do not deserve the hardest place in life, and the scantiest doles of its good things, and a double portion of disability and opprobrium. Arraying ourselves as we do in the ancient honours once beseeming human nature, how can we bring ourselves to think the crown does but hide an outbreaking leprosy on the brow, and the robe shot with its threads of gold does but veil the ruin of the worm? We are built up in pride by that habit of expecting honour at the hands of others, the germ of which is perhaps hereditary, and we repel and resent that self-humiliation to which the Spirit must needs bring the best of us.

The work of the sin-convincing Spirit is further hindered by the fact that we *judge ourselves in the light of an imaginary future*, as well as by the ideals of an outfading past. We draw the material for our own portraiture from the flattering hopes we have been wont to cherish, rather than from the practical record we have left behind us. We had meant to be holy and noble and without reproach, and have not yet relinquished our great intentions, and it is from that standpoint we form the estimate of ourselves. It is not the spendthrift youth only, with a small income and extravagant conceptions of life, who makes audacious drafts upon the future. We are all prone to live in a fools' paradise, in the ethical sense. We are not yet at the end of our career, and of course we are going some day to be faultless from every point of view; indeed, faultless is no word for it. We shall yet succeed in making ourselves into such self-forgetting saints that both earth and heaven will be ready to do us homage. And the glamour of that dream is always before our eyes when we are called to the task of

knowing ourselves. The future, as we intend to shape it, will more than outbalance the past. And we are sustained in this view by the judgment of the world around us. It favours hero-worship, and declares there is more good in human nature than morose people give it credit for. The doctrine of human depravity is obsolete; for are there not unerring intimations of right and wrong in all human hearts? and do no high ideals root themselves in men of vicious and dissolute lives? The theologian, with his doctrine of the fall of man, is the libeller-general of all society, and when men are bad they are to be pitied, for they cannot help it. They always improve with adequate opportunity and education, and men should be commiserated if they are bad, and not blamed. And so, misled by our own pride, and flattered by the loose opinions of our contemporaries, and swelling vastly with the day-dream of our coming virtue, we resist the Spirit who seeks to fill with self-abasement and pierce our hearts with pain and shame.

Another difficulty encountered by the Spirit in this preparatory work is that we *find ourselves with personalities whose natural perceptions are more active than their moral.* Two diseases work within us, our physical senses are in a condition of list, morbid, and neurotic sleeplessness, and our spiritual senses are blunted by an ominous coma and a fast-developing induration. The perceptions of pleasure and pain are so much keener than the consciousness of right and wrong, that we never forget the wrongs done to us by others, and spend our lives in counting up the pitiful sum, whilst our heart grows stone-dead to the trespasses we have committed against both God and our fellows. We are occupied with an arithmetic that is entirely false, vicious, and misleading, and can never give us an equation of justice and of

truth. The teacher of elementary physiology sometimes illustrates, by a very simple experiment, the varying degrees of sensibility in different parts of the human body. If two or three pencil-points be pressed into the flesh where the nerve processes are densely massed, each separate point will be discriminated. Press them where the nerves are more widely scattered, and the prick will be felt as only one. And is it not thus with us in our relations to visible and invisible things? Whilst our natural sensibilities are so keen, that we can give a most minute and detailed account of all the wrongs inflicted upon us by others, our moral sensibilities seem to be represented by a single attenuated nerve-thread only, which is so obtuse that it fails to register a tithe of the wrongs we do to others; and it is hard to bring us to that state of soul described by the expression "pricked in the heart." And we come to look upon these solitary delinquencies as more than outweighed by the losses of which we are the victims through the multitudinous delinquencies of others. We are martyrs to be vindicated rather than transgressors to be punished, and in the great reckoning day will it not be found we have suffered more evil than we have wrought? And by thinking of these possible offsets in judgment, we shut out the operation of the Spirit as He seeks to convince of sin. To bring home to universal man a sense of his absolute guilt is no easy task for the Spirit to achieve.

We are sometimes *trained to self-justification by the exigencies of our daily life*, and a tenacious habit is formed within us adverse to the sin-convincing work of the Spirit. The current conditions of society are such that certain cardinal moralities, and a reputation for them, are necessary to worldly success. We must vindicate our name at every

turn if we are to live. The competition that prevails in all sections of the world, grave and gay alike, is in the last analysis the competition of reputations, and we must keep up our reputations, unless we are to go to the wall. Those who wish to outstrip or overreach us in the contest, whisper some undefined reproach or hint at a damaging peccadillo, and we are compelled to be active in parrying these assaults. And in this way the habit of self-justification is formed, and soon grows into exaggerated proportions, and thus the struggle of our daily life is responsible for a large fraction of the pharisee that is in us. It has become a second nature to us to overlook our own faults entirely, and to be ever dressing out our virtues for the eye of the world; and we carry the habit of self-vindication into God's presence, and exercise it before His bar, perhaps at the very time we are joining in the General Confession of the Liturgy. When trees have been bent by the prevailing winds that have been beating upon them for half a century, it is not easy to make them lean in the other direction. A passing hurricane will not effect the reversion. And so with us, when we have assumed a certain habit of mind under the influences that have been acting upon us from our childhood upwards. The long training of our ordinary life adds to the difficulty we experience in consenting to be subjects of this sin-convincing work of the Spirit.

Some of the creatures in the far away depths of the ocean have acquired a strange power of intermittent luminosity. When they are chased by strong and ferocious adversaries, they give off bright and sudden flashes of light to frighten and baffle their pursuers. But in spite of this brilliant eccentricity they are not suns and planets, but mere bits of organised jelly. Some people we meet are not unlike that.

They baffle their competitors who are seeking to devour them, by fits of integrity, outbursts of almsgiving and philanthropy, flashes of Sunday church-going, and they flatter themselves that they are all light and splendour and sanctity. It is a habit they have acquired in mere self-defence, and when they are brought out of their weltering surroundings and put into a spiritual environment, how their splendours pale! They are by no means ruling lights of the seventh heaven.

Our *passionate self-interests league themselves against the work of the Spirit* as He comes to convince us of sin. We live in a world sadly lacking in charity and tenderness, and to plead guilty of a trespass in the common affairs of life would often be to invite punishment more or less severe. The world gives us the full benefit of all the confessions we pour into its ear, and we soon learn the art of keeping confessions to ourselves. In very few communities indeed is the admission of error a highway to advancement. The confession of a Chinese prisoner is required by the laws of the country before the judge can sentence him to death, and confession of course comes to have ominous associations for those who live under such a judicature from generation to generation. Men will brave the most excruciating tortures which are applied to compel the confession, rather than open the lips. That is true in a modified sense of almost all countries and populations. Wherever Governments are cruel and public opinion is harsh and pitiless, you will find a proportionate reluctance to admit error and shortcoming. The most immaculate people in the world, according to their own estimate at least, are to be found in the lands where rule is despotic and public opinion pitiless. And some traces of this fact are present in our own midst.

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For the servant to confess error would be in many instances to challenge dismissal, especially if his position is one of trust and responsibility; for a master to confess error would be to invite strikes and to risk the break-up of his authority; for a tradesman to confess grave error would in some cases lead to a discontinuance of the business that has been given him. I have heard some men plead that authority must be upheld when it is wrong, because to allow that it had made mistakes might pave the way to anarchic conditions of feeling. And this repugnance to the acknowledgment of error, ingrained into us through our worldly training and experience, influences us when the Spirit begins to deal with us and to convince us of our sin. Confession is almost inseparably associated with the idea of drastic punishment. It seems a perilous thing to say, "I deserve banishment from God's presence, and every pain that the law holds over the head of the transgressor," for we may be taken at our word. The forces of the past which tend to close the heart against the conviction of sin, not infrequently seem to overbear the forces of reason, natural conscience, and inbred veracity.

As we reflect upon the obstinate difficulties arraying themselves against the work of the sin-convincing Spirit, the question once asked by the disciples rises again to our lips, "Who then can be saved?" and the only answer to it is that made by Jesus Himself, "With God all things are possible." The Spirit descends into our midst to illustrate the boundless possibilities of divine power and to achieve that which is too hard for man.

What is the method of the Spirit's logic? By what process does He introduce into the human mind and implant there these stern, unflattering convictions of sin? His work is creative, and we cannot penetrate its many secrets; and

answers to these questions are necessarily fragmentary and inadequate. He exemplifies in His own presence, and in the presence of Him whom He glorifies, new and impressive ideals of excellence which suffice to convict man of his many offences and shortcomings. He puts a new atmosphere of sympathy about the human soul, and wins it to lay bare its sad and shameful secrets. He restores to the disorganised conscience vitality, quickness, the sense of moral proportion.

Job's friends argued with him for five days and could not move him from his rigid asseverations of innocence, rectitude, and lifelong well-doing. He felt their unmistakable inferiority of moral tone, and there was little in their temper or speech to stimulate his powers to clearer discrimination. Their lack of sympathy and understanding confirmed him in his self-respecting reserve. They had no new spiritual ideals with which to correct him and put him to shame. But it was far otherwise when God spake. That holy presence brought in a moment a conviction into which the trio had been trying to argue him for days, but on altogether mistaken grounds. "Now I abhor myself," said the humbled patriarch, "and repent in dust and ashes." And the course of that history repeats itself wherever the Spirit descends and teaches the honest and open mind.

The Holy Spirit for the fulfilment of His appointed work puts *an environment of new ideals before the mind.* He testifies of Christ, and in so doing makes us see how in His humanity all divine excellences have come down into the midst of men and made themselves a new law to the conscience. We are not, after all, in a universe dominated by avarice, envy, falsehood, animalism, but by unselfishness, sanctity, truth, spiritual principle.

Some little time ago I was passing through a country lane,

and saw a flock of sheep feeding on the hillside. They seemed to be milk-white, justifying the scriptural metaphor, "He giveth snow like wool," and fit to be welcomed as pets into a drawing-room. In comparison with the green pastures in which they were feeding, their fleeces seemed bleached into spotlessness. Not long after, a snowstorm came, and I had occasion to pass by the same field. But the sheep did not seem to be the same creatures at all. The background had changed as if by magic, and they were in a new world, the conditions of which served to bring out their griminess. They looked speckled, dingy, piebald, and anything but clean in comparison with the glittering snows in which they were nestling. The collier, rising out of the pit into the sunshine after a night of toil, scarcely looked grimier than those spotless sheep of yesterday. The stainless and dazzling snow served to bring into view all the dust from the roadside, all the bits of blackthorn from the hedges, all the carbon flakes ejected from the chimneys of the adjoining town that had been caught in their fleeces.

So when the Spirit brings down from the presence of God on high into these human souls new ideals of truth and righteousness, love, purity, faithfulness. The soul sees itself against a new ethical background. The schoolboy is apt to look at himself in comparison with the companions who are fast breaking loose through all the restraints of virtue, and to form a flattering estimate of his own high morality. The business man compares himself with those who mislead and betray clients and customers, and is apt to regard himself as a paragon. The philanthropist puts himself by the side of churl and niggard, and says, How open-handed I am! A man poses before the background of ethical mediocrity current in his town, or city, or nation, and is quite content

with his past record. And for the time his self-satisfaction seems to be warranted. But by and by the new background comes in. He awakes to the fact that he is in God's presence, and sees himself standing by the side of the spotless Son of man in whom the Father has revealed Himself, and before the great white throne of all-searching judgment, and he is filled with shame and self-condemnation.

The Spirit enwraps the man to whom He comes with *a new atmosphere of sympathy and graciousness*, unlike that which exists in the world and provokes to ingenuous self-justification. He who comes under this ministry feels almost instinctively His right to search the heart and bring every delinquency before a divine tribunal. It is useless to attempt concealment, for the Spirit knows us more thoroughly than we know ourselves, and can constrain the most reluctant natures into a consciousness of their own evil. Indeed, the desire to cloak or dissemble silently disappears, for we instinctively recognise His revelations, however unwelcome, are benevolent in motive. Whilst the full revelation of divine love cannot be vouchsafed at this stage, we see at once the attempt to convict us is not that of some competitor who is trying to smite us down. He acts upon us, not like the angry storm which leads men to bar their doors and close their shutters, but like the soft south wind, which opens every labyrinth of the heart and life to the light. It is no treachery or ill-will or unrelenting antagonism which is bringing right home to us the unwelcome facts of the past, but helping and healing beneficence. In the most vivid revival of the half-forgotten sin there is no malicious exaggeration. His enforcement of the fact of our guilt is recognised as a gentle and tender effort to teach us those forgotten realities of law with which we have to reckon,

and to put us into a better position for dealing with them. Whatever pain He inflicts, it is inseparable from the cure of a dire disease, and from the process of arousing faculties marked hitherto by ominous numbness and dormancy. He brings the hard rebel world, ever on the alert to justify itself, into an atmosphere that is something more wonderful even than the essence of compassionate fatherhood.

But over and above these things, a *new power of moral discernment* needs to be aroused in those who are to be re-created by the ministry of the Spirit. Christ's bodily presence amongst men seemed to encircle them with a love and sympathy to which they had been hitherto strange, and bring into the earthly horizon new standards of spiritual excellence and perfection. But there was no widespread and adequate appreciation of the fact and no national contrition proportioned to the larger revelations made in His life. Only those felt rebuked by His transcendent example and moved to self-abasement by His tenderness who were in open conflict with the Mosaic law. The Pharisee met Jesus and had no sense of guilt. The idea of spiritual sin seemed to be entirely foreign to the genius of his thought. He looked upon the surpassing excellence of this man of Nazareth as mere eccentricity, a freak of fanaticism, a spasm of madness. Men needed new senses, an enlargement of the conscience that would enable them to feel the guilt of unchastened desire, evil imagination, soulless worship. It is said that the fish living in dark subterranean pools, which have lost the power of seeing, have developed a new sensitiveness which compensates for their loss. They are startled if a single grain of sand be allowed to fall into the water, so acute have their discernments become. And where the Spirit comes, whilst He deadens to the illusions of the world

and its vain shows, He makes men conscious of the paramount significance of the faintest things which touch their relation to the invisible. The tiniest suggestion of sin, the single throb of rebellious desire, unworthy thoughts of God and secret discontent with His counsels, all come into the reckoning, and indicate to the man the alarming forces that have been working in the infinitesimal things of his life. And at last, under this new ministry of the Spirit, Simon the Pharisee feels he must be as profoundly penitent as the woman who was a sinner, and the proud worshipper in the temple must be shame-stricken as the poor publican, and Nicodemus confess his need of salvation just as abjectly as the thief on the cross. The pride of the past was unmitigated ignorance and obstinacy. By awakening these new perceptions the Spirit brings into view the countless spiritual sins of the former days, and shuts men up for hope to the one common law of mercy.

The fact that the sins of the spirit as well as the sins of the body are rebuked by this inward Teacher is indicated by that expansion of the words immediately added;—indeed sins of the spirit are the roots of all outward transgression,—"of sin, because they believe not on Me." In the view of the Spirit this is the core of all heinousness in either the ancient or the modern world, and the Spirit will demonstrate it to those with whom He deals. The greatest crime which blotted Jewish history, or indeed the entire history of man, took its rise in what we may account a slight aberration. This was the subject-matter of the indictment brought home to the Jewish conscience on the day of Pentecost, and emphasised on every like day when the Spirit comes with power. It is possible, of course, to shape a plausible apology for those who crucified their

King. They were patriots, and He had disappointed their national hope. He was making Himself, as He thought, a sacrifice for sin, but they wanted an emancipator of another order, who would wield against their foes an ever-victorious sword. If that is the complete explanation of their rejection of Christ, is that no sin? Did the Jew think of himself as a patriot first, and a man made in God's image, needing to be be saved from all which defaced that image, afterwards? If unbelief took its rise in this inverted order of ideas, did that involve no criminal obliquity? And wherever there is unbelief to-day there is the same essential guilt. There is a tendency amongst us to make the disbelief of Christ a matter of trivial significance. The scientific spirit has spread, and men find it difficult to accept Christ, with all that Christ is said to have claimed. It is assumed that the difficulty is intellectual only, and that it is inevitable it should master men, and that we have no more right to condemn men for the lack of faith than we have to flog school children because they have decayed teeth, short sight, or red hair. Now there might be justice in all that, if the Bible made faith an intellectual rather than a moral and spiritual quality. If modern Churches have made faith a matter of intellectual opinion, the apostolic founders of the Church did not. It demands moral conditions for its origin and perpetuation, and unbelief in Christ has the closest possible connexion with the power of sin over the nature. Where men cannot believe in Him, they lack sympathy with His central aims. They do not want that moral renovation and endowment Christ comes to bring. They subordinate the moral to the intellectual. They have in them that which keeps from close and intimate contact with Christ.

Let us listen for a moment to the conversation of two

men as they pace the deck of a steamer. A raft has just appeared upon the horizon, and the living skeletons crawling upon it have hoisted a sign of distress. All eyes are turned towards it. "The captain will never alter the steering directions and reverse the engines, and lose time and money for the sake of picking up those miserable slaves. He must be in port to the day and hour. He cannot swerve from his course. It is marked out on the chart. The officer on the bridge and the man at the steering wheel have both received their directions." "But he will," insists the other. "The whole raft of them would not fetch a hundred dollars in the slave-markets of your country, but he will go out of his way and pick them up." A mere difference of opinion between the two passengers. Nay, more, it involves a radical difference of character. The barbarian prince has been taught that life is cheap, and has seen slaves and wives and courtiers slaughtered for a whim. The other has drunk in the spirit of the Christian civilisation under which he has been trained, and is tender, humane, a lover of his kind. The different judgments represent not mere differences of opinion, but radical differences of character. Will God bring a new range of laws into play to authenticate the mission of Him who comes to lift men out of their jeopardy and woe? Is cosmic force more sacred than life, righteousness, love, and must the old order of nature never give place to a new order? Is the so-called uniformity of law, as man conceives it, of larger significance than the moral issues of the divine government? The dogmatic denial of the supernatural is in its deepest analysis a question of character. An intensely ethical man who believes in an ethical God cannot well deny it. Is there then no sin for the Spirit to rebuke underlying the disbelief of Christ? Christ comes primarily

as a messenger of salvation from sin, and to reject Him is to proclaim our adhesion to that from which He seeks to deliver us. And the rejection of Jesus is more than the choice of sin itself. The choice was impulsive; the rejection is deliberate. The choice was ignorant; the rejection is that of knowledge. Men sin one sin at a time; but when they reject Christ, they elect to stand by the many sins from which He comes to deliver them. The guilt of both Jew and Gentile alike finds its culmination in the rejection of Christ; and this it is which the Spirit makes us to feel in developing the sensibilities of a new life within us.

The conviction of sin is *the groundwork of all religious belief*, and there can be no genuine consciousness of divine things which does not begin here. The sense of sin when duly aroused gives rise to faith in righteousness. "Of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye see Me no more." The Spirit bears witness to the spotlessness of an absent Saviour. His very presence is a vindication of the suffering Master's memory, and a sign that in both earth and heaven righteousness rules. Men cannot be persuaded of these two facts without passing on to the third, that righteousness asserts itself in active judgment. "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." That prince lost his dominion in Christ's death, and was thenceforth branded with the sign of his final condemnation.

This revived faith in judgment becomes the very substance of the most significant doctrines of the new faith. Let men be possessed with this new sense of sin, and they will no longer make light of the threatened retributions of the life to come. Let them be possessed of this new sense of sin, and they will no longer seek to eliminate all penal elements from the atonement and convert it into transcendent

sentiment. It is useless arguing with men, or asking them to unite their voices in the common confession of catholic doctrine, till the Spirit effects this first change within them. It is said that the coolie labourers in South America were at one time plied with opium, so that they lost all desire to escape out of their terrible serfdom. Under the influence of this drug they became forgetful of home ties, oblivious of their toils, and half insensible to the lash that was sometimes laid upon their shoulders. They had no wish to be ransomed. They were living in an enchanted land, in spite of what looked to others like stripes and weariness and blood. They would soon have felt their condition, and have longed for escape and ransom, if they could have been brought to themselves. It is perfectly idle to go to an opium-eater, like Coleridge or De Quincey, and say: "My friend, you are in sight of the debtor's prison. You will soon be in penury and disgrace and irretrievable ruin unless some helper appears, and you recognise his power to extricate you, and put yourself in his hands." The wretched men think themselves in palaces of fabulous splendour, attended by fairies and harped to by angels. You must dispel these embruted dreams, and restore the brain and nervous system to sober and healthy tone, before they will feel the reasonableness of an offer of help and redemption. That is a preliminary to all improvement. So the Spirit must come and bring us back to ourselves, dispelling our stupefactions and awakening a sense of our peril and degradation, before we can see the need of the help that is extended to us and appreciate the possible retributions that may be awaiting us in the life to come. When our moral sensibilities are duly stirred, we shall see the reasonableness of Christ's work of ransom. We must have the sense of sin before we can estimate aright the

frightful magnitude of the retributions with which it is threatened. In pricking us to the inmost heart, and bringing home to the conscience a due sense of past transgression, the Spirit lays the basis of all true religious belief.

Remember in what an awful state the man is who lacks this new sense of sin. If the natural senses were blotted out, a man would walk into some death-trap or other in less than twenty-four hours. And when a man lacks these spiritual senses, is the peril less tragic, think you? We cannot expect to escape ruin unless the sense of sin is quickened within us. For those who have sinned in however slight a degree there must be a painful process of awaking. We must ever continue outside the kingdom of heaven till we have passed through this experience of conviction.

Not long ago I read the story of a deaf and dumb mother, who, shortly after the birth of her first child, arose in the middle of the night, took a piece of burning coal from off the fire, rushed to the cot of her babe, and let the coal fall crashing upon the floor. The infant started. For the moment the attendant was afraid that some fit of insanity had seized the poor creature, and that she was about to do violence to her child. When, however, the child started at the crash of the falling coal, the deaf and dumb mother clapped her hands with joy, for had she not demonstrated that the child possessed the sense of hearing, and would not be shut out from those words of speech and song from which she herself was a life-long exile?

The highest thing that the love of God or man can seek for you is that you may have this sense of sin. Has it been born within you? Do you possess this sign of a dawning spiritual life? Do you start up at any or every suggestion

of wrong that may approach you? Do you loathe yourself for all that is loathsome before God? You may acquire other things in time, but if you lack this sense of sin, you must inevitably be shut out from the kingdom of heaven and all the sublime wonders it comprehends. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." The preparatory step to that mighty change is the quickening of the sense of sin.

IV

The Spirit and the New Birth

THE SPIRIT AND THE NEW BIRTH

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.—JOHN iii. 6.
The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.—TITUS iii. 5.

NICODEMUS in his first visit to Christ offered himself as a subject upon whom Christ was to test His dialectic, rather than as a candidate for that mystic power of renewal Christ was sent to minister. He thought, if the evidence was adequate, he could be argued, open-minded as he was, into a recognition of the kingdom of heaven and the possible part and place of this young Nazarene in its establishment. Christ startles him by pointing out at once the chasm of cleavage there was between Himself and His hearer, and asserting that a spiritual miracle, more wonderful than any which had awakened the reverence of this devout scholar, must accomplish itself, before he can come into discerning sympathy with the kingdom and into the fellowship of its priceless privilege.

Christ and Nicodemus attach to the term "kingdom of heaven" entirely different senses, and that is the first reason for the divergent points of view they occupy. In the creed of this estimable patriot, the Jewish state itself was the germ-cell of the coming kingdom. Let that state but get a fair chance, let the Providence governing all things bring back more genial political conditions, and the lowly state would

develop into the peerless and triumphant kingdom of the prophetic visions. The sons of Abraham were already within the kingdom through their circumcision, and worthy rabbis must surely have right to the honours, decorations, and chief seats of the kingdom.

The crucial error in the mind of this midnight interviewer was, that he identified the type with the essential substance. Races of low culture connect the shadow or reflection with the very life itself. Some savages refuse to have their portraits taken, because they think that the reflection is the essential soul, and that their life passes into the power of him who possesses their picture. The American Indians explained the disappearance of the buffalo from their prairies on the ground that the white man had been there with his camera, and had carried off the shadows or reflections of the animals. A trace of this superstition survives in Germany, and indeed in some parts of our own country. When a death takes place, mirrors and fire-irons and all bright surfaces are at once covered up, lest the spirit which has just left the body should draw with it in its flight from the flesh the spirits mirrored in the polished surfaces of household ornaments. And in the same way Nicodemus identified the kingdom with the poor, thin, unsubstantial shadow of it reflected in the worship of the temple and the theocratic life of the nation. He had put the type for the substance, the symbol for the great spiritual verity, and had assumed that, if the shadow were to pass, if the Jewish state were to be dissolved, the kingdom of God would perish from amongst men. The fleeting symbol, the reflection which addressed the eye, that was the essential reality. He had no perception of the pure spirituality of the kingdom in its first principles and beginnings. The kingdom of heaven

and its essential laws, interests, and privileges could not grow up out of those Jewish institutions, which simply foreshadowed it. If the kingdom had been a glorified commonwealth only, Nicodemus was perfectly right in his view, and men might of course be educated into it. The kingdom, however, is spiritual, and its subjects must be spiritualised by a stupendous miracle before they can discern its nature. The Jews were accustomed to think that the first step towards the betterment for which they waited was that a deliverer should come and fight his victorious way to the vacant throne of his forefathers. The drift of Christ's teaching was to remind them that the subjects must first be introduced into the kingdom, for the kingdom at present was all but a desolation and a solitude. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Its facts and interests and movements were more widely separated from that which was only earthly and natural, than were the various kingdoms of nature from each other. The noblest and the wisest could not be trained into it. Nicodemus must find for himself some other pathway of admission than that of debate, sacred lore, the interpretation of signs and wonders. His conception of the kingdom was gross, material, misleading.

Inasmuch as the kingdom was not what Nicodemus thought it, Christ's method of seeing it must obviously be in sharp contrast to his. Contemporary Jewish opinion saw in Nicodemus a duly authenticated teacher of the law. He bore the stamp of incontestable orthodoxy, and was one of the demigods of the national councils; and a very estimable leader he made. With genteel and insinuating self-assertion he seeks to vindicate the position popularly accorded to him. Of trained literary insight, of sturdy

patriotism, of irreproachable outward life, what better fitness could he have to hear and understand those further statements about His own work and office which Jesus might still hold in reserve? Who more competent than he to pass judgment on Christ's claims? "Rabbi, we know Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do the miracles that Thou doest except God be with him." He allows the extraordinary factors in Christ's work. He sees in Him a lofty spiritual genius he would only be too glad to patronise. If satisfied on one or two additional points, he will make Him a *protégé*, and bespeak for Him the good-will and support of his contemporaries. In the present perplexing crisis of the national life the young prophet may have light to offer or heroic work to achieve.

A confession of faith and loyalty that goes so far must surely commend him to Jesus. He is at the threshold of the kingdom if any man ever stood there, and the young Galilæan can perhaps guide him through the onward steps that seem more or less difficult and obscure. And in spite of the parade of knowledge,—"we know,"—there is some trace of the humility that a belief in God begets in the most imperious mind. He is willing to learn from an unschooled carpenter. His belief in God's sovereignty, as well as his familiarity with the past history of Israel, compelled him to recognise that God often left the line of the succession to find His most influential prophets and reformers in corners and byways. But the supplement to his existing knowledge which this Pharisee is seeking must come as all his learning has come; the old dialectic process must be continued. He is half-way to faith; but Christ must take him by the hand and guide him along the remaining steps; yet, of course, by the pathways of Hillel and Shammai and Gamaliel. He

has reasoned himself, honest creature that he is, into a half conversion, and Christ must do the rest. Christ bluntly tells him his foundation is unsound, and there must be a new and more radical beginning. The King must needs bring him into the kingdom by a gift, and Nicodemus will have to open the page of a new consciousness before he can truly learn.

It will perhaps help us to appreciate the force of our Lord's teaching upon this most important subject if we ask what are the broad and salient facts implied in a natural birth? What does it mean? What is the significance of the crisis it marks?

1. It is an event in which inertia, blindness, undeveloped sensibility cease, and intelligence, capacity, far-ranging and manifold discriminations begin to dawn.

2. It is an event which helps to determine temperament, and forms a nucleus or starting-point from which the after-life and character are evolved.

3. It is a translation from a narrow and ignoble environment to freedom, majesty, independent life.

4. It is the genesis of two sets of interacting functions, the harmonious co-operation of which is necessary to all high and noble life; the functions which are energised by the divine will which quickens life, and the functions we must bring into play ourselves.

5. It is an event in which there is present the active virtue of a life-giving sovereignty, which transcends all human comprehension. In London slum or gypsy tent or Kafir hut, there can be no birth without the mystic influx of life from the sacred spring of all being.

If the change upon which Christ insists is to be in any sense a birth, it must comprehend similar things.

1. This event must bring to an end dulness, paralysis, spiritual dormancy, and replace these conditions by such keen, active, spiritual consciousness as no human power can possibly awaken within men.

2. This event must implant in human nature the graces and virtues of a distinctively heavenly life, graces that can neither filter into the disposition through the first birth, nor be trained into men by the wisest and most sacred of educational systems.

3. This event must take a man out of the limitations in which his first birth left him, and place his feet in realms of beauty, freedom, imperial vastness.

4. This event brings into the soul divine forces that act to some extent independently of the man himself, and at the same time endows him with gifts, the exercise and development of which will depend upon his own sustained voluntary effort.

5. This change must be effected by a sovereign agency in the heart of man that we can neither command nor comprehend, an agency clothed with the creative attributes of the eternal.

1. *Just as a physical birth must precede our knowledge of earthly things, so spiritual birth must precede our knowledge of heavenly things.*

There is within every one of us an ingrained unfitness to receive the things of the Spirit, which nothing but a new birth by the power of God can take away.

Where the rudiments of a sense exist, it may be helped or educated; but the sense itself can only be imparted by a birth. The optician may aid the natural power of the eye with his lenses, or hide a defect by what is artificial; the surgeon may transplant flesh, and build up some mutilated

feature, or cover over some disfigurement: but no skill can create the specialised sense which distinguishes colour, detects scent, or judges of musical pitch. These incomprehensible discriminations come with the birth, and, if wanting, are irretrievably so. And the spiritual senses by which the things of the kingdom are discerned issue from a spiritual birth, effected by divine power alone. You cannot make a worm, with its one poor sense, see the glory of sunsets and rainbows, even if you give it the vantage-ground of Snowdon; nor can you make a sea-slug responsive to the charm of music, even if you put it into an aquarium resonant with the strains of a brass band. There are some things the most expert instructor could not teach a Swan River savage, who can only count up to five. And Christ cannot teach away the ignorance and limitation of the man who does not recognise his need of the recreating breath of the Spirit. The natural man's incapacity for spiritual things can only be dealt with by a miracle which makes him into an entirely different type of being.

One faculty of the brain cannot be made to do the work of another, and that must apply still more rigidly to the faculties of the natural and the spiritual parts of man's being. Experimental religion admits of an intellectual presentation, just as light and sound may be described by mathematical formulæ; but you convey in that way no influential conception of what they are and of the effects they produce. A blind man cannot know the charm of a sunset, although he may have mastered the secrets of the spectrum; nor can the deaf man know the delight of a perfectly rendered oratorio, although he may be a mathematician, and have all recent researches at his fingers' ends.

Our instructors in natural philosophy tell us that light is produced by a series of vibrations in the ether. At the red end of the spectrum the undulations measure two hundred and fifty billions to the inch, orange two hundred and forty billions, yellow two hundred and twenty billions, blue one hundred and ninety billions. If you take the trouble to divide the heavens up into degrees, and to work out the formulæ of the different colours blending there, you can make an arithmetical statement of what the sunset is. Is it not gorgeous? The blind man, however interesting he may find your piles of figures, does not feel the force of your adjective. The mathematical faculties of the brain cannot do the work of the æsthetic faculties, and generate the same qualities of enjoyment. You turn an exhibition of paintings into a series of sums, having as their basis these calculations about the tiny wavelets of movement in the gamut of colour; but when you have done your utmost, you can convey no notion of the painter's art, although your hearer may possess an imagination like Shakespeare's, a capacity for the perception of natural law like Newton's, and can work out his sums with the speed of twenty chartered accountants thrown into one.

Or you try to give a stone-deaf man the arithmetical notion of sound. He knows what a vibration is, for he has handled many a spring, and has now and again been on a steamer when the timbers have shuddered. In a bass note there are forty vibrations to a second, and in a tenor note one thousand nine hundred, with, of course, boundless variations between the two. If you take the trouble, you can turn the score for Handel's Pastoral Symphony into a series of sums, and represent the various cadences in the terms of an elaborate arithmetic. Is it not grand? you inquire of

your stone-deaf friend by the finger-alphabet. Does it not seem to take us back to the starlit night of the nativity at Bethlehem? But by leading a man through the labyrinths of arithmetic, you cannot make him feel the delicate force of those exquisite compositions.

And still less possible is it for an intellectual faculty to act as substitute for a strictly spiritual faculty, and help us to apprehend heavenly things. If when faculties are acting in the same physical plane, you cannot make one do the work of another, and see the things with which each is especially adapted to deal, much less is it possible for those powers of perception which act in entirely different planes to interchange amongst each other. The mind is like a household of servants whose labours are subdivided by an inviolable law. Natural senses cannot act in place of the spiritual.

But the facts go beyond the illustrations already used. In some cases the inability to see is a constitutional misfortune. *But the incapacity of which Christ speaks is closely linked with a moral derangement we have brought upon ourselves.* We have so perverted to the uses of the flesh whatever rudiments of spiritual faculties have been left to us, that ominous hallucinations take the place of the things of the kingdom.

The splendours of the Alps would scarcely impress themselves upon a man who had drunk himself into delirium tremens. In an earthly paradise his inflamed brain sees a sheer pandemonium. The sweet, bounding air brings no sense of refreshment to fevered brow, twitching muscles, and burning blood. For all that he sees of nature's charm, he might as well be in a tropical swamp, or in one of the smoking cities of the plain. The majestic precipices

suggest the brink of the pit, and its shadows of everlasting woe. The whiteness of the snow-peaks, the azure of the sky, the sapphire of the lake, convey no beauty to the eye, no gladness to the soul. He might as well be broiling in the recesses of a volcano. In the glittering crags that tower above the highest pine forests he sees white-robed angels of vengeance sweeping down upon an unholy world. In the pink and orange sunsets, and the rose tints on the highest snow-fields, he sees only consuming flame. The fever engendered by his flagrant intemperance is scalding through his veins like so much escaped steam. Every movement suggests murder, every strain torture, the tinkle of the cow-bells in the distant valley a call to doom. His system must be rid of this maddening poison, his temperature brought to its normal level, healthier pulses be made to beat within him, he must be born to new health and life, before he can see the sublimities in the midst of which he is placed, and drink the inspiration of their delight.

And in the same way the heart must be set free from the distorting vapours of passion, the poison of sin must be taken out of a man's veins, he must feel the thrill of a life renewed to holiness and health by the Spirit of life and peace, before he can see the glories of God's spiritual kingdom. He cannot believe in the heaven that environs him on every side till he has become the subject of this divine birth.

2. *Birth tends to put a significant stamp upon the after character.*

Many account its influence paramount to that of education, after-companionship, voluntary effort. It certainly contributes much to the features of the coming man. Now all religious disciplines will go for little, unless they be helped by a spiritual birth, which is the earnest of a new

personality. Regeneration is necessary not only to open the eyes of our spiritual understanding, but to assimilate us to that spiritual order Christ came to set up, and so effect our actual incorporation into the kingdom of God. Aptitudes and dispositions not conferred by the first birth must be implanted within us by this act of the Holy Spirit. In repeating his demand for this vital change, Christ's modification of phrase is significant. First it was "see the kingdom of God," and then "enter" it. To enter is more than to see, for we may see from afar off as we stand upon the threshold. We are familiar with the modern tendency to emphasise heredity, and at once admit that it is a mighty force men have to reckon with. Rarely does the man who is a born artist make himself into a successful engineer. Premiums and apprenticeships and evening classes count for little against the ruling passion. He who is a born explorer will make a poor creature in the counting-house, even if you try and reconcile him to his prison with the most munificent bribes. The youth who is trained and settled in life against the grain of his inherent tastes, will always be an unhappy misfit,—"the round peg in the square hole," as we sometimes describe it. The best specimens of a tropical race could not adapt themselves to the life of a Hudson's Bay colony. The Laplander could not make himself by any possibility a settler on the borders of the equatorial lakes. A race of hunters will die away just as soon as civilisation touches it and insists that its people shall settle in townships. When a man confronts conditions that run against all his hereditary proclivities and adaptations, he woefully succumbs. And so in spiritual things. The natural man cannot fit himself to the laws and fellowships and requirements of the kingdom. The kingdom touches him only to destroy, unless he can

find the secret of speedy assimilation. A new law of heredity, thank God! comes into play which suspends the old, and affixes an entirely new stamp upon the character. This second birth is the ruling factor in determining the Christ-like impress borne by the new man "raised up in us."

The passions which bring us into conflict with the principles and relationships of Christ's kingdom are in us at our first entrance into the world. We inherit disqualifications deep-rooted as our life for the duties of the kingdom, as well as for real sympathy with its essential gladness. The kingdom of heaven has no misfits, and the man who should find entrance there without any experience of this regenerative force, would be the round peg in the square hole. A man with the convict brand upon his body, and the convict sack-cloth about his limbs, might just as reasonably expect to find access into a royal drawing-room, as you or I, with the marks of the old Adam upon us, hope to pass the gates separating the realms of good and evil, light and darkness, and stand before God in Zion. A heavenly citizenship can come to us only when we are begotten of God to newness of life. We cannot fulfil its obligations, enjoy its fellowships, share its lofty achievements, till the old nature has been devitalised, and the pulse of a new life has made itself felt. The first birth gives no enfranchisement in this holy territory. We are borne hither and thither by the will of this world and its prince, till the power of the Spirit descends to translate us into a new world, and makes us free to direct our own steps. A man might as well try to walk to Lake Tanganyika in fetters, as the old or new school Nicodemus seek to enter the kingdom with the impediments of the old nature about him. The filthiness of the flesh may even

be put away, the man be full of winning courtesy and refinement, he may be a patriot of the most genuine metal; but, for all that, secret trammels weigh down the soul to the dust. The old must be left behind, all things must be made new, before he can fit himself to the kingdom, and fulfil a destiny worthy of himself.

An English traveller tells of a terrible cure for leprosy practised on one of the islands of the Southern Seas. The sufferer is wrapped in the green leaves of a tree reported to possess powerful medicinal properties, and then placed in a disused hut. Beneath the hut a fire is kindled, the branches of the tree from which the leaves have been taken being used as fuel. The leper, shut up in the smoke and steam, is left to broil for hours. The pain is extreme, but the poor creature's cries are disregarded, for it is said if he survives the ordeal he will be healed. The antiseptic properties of the tree will be carried into skin, lungs, and blood, so working out deliverance from the hideous defilement that has cursed his past. Now it is conceivable that all this might be done to the victim without reincorporating him into the relationships to which he had once belonged. The man might be healed, and for many reasons feel himself an outcast still. Perhaps a new government has taken possession of the islands during the term of his isolation, and he cannot bend himself to the higher civilisation it has introduced. The laws for the registration of property, the sanitary regulations imposed by newly organised and progressive municipalities, trial by jury rather than by the war-club, are things he strongly resents. It may be that new arts and industries sprang up during the years of his exile, and although the disease is healed, his fingers were so benumbed by it that he could not acquire any of these new

arts, and fit himself for new grooves of employment. He needs something more than deliverance from this curse of physical uncleanness if he is to become a prosperous and happy citizen for the rest of his days.

And in the spiritual realm the mere ordeal of cure does not meet all the disabilities and privations of our lost condition. We need more even than Christ's baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, if we are to come into the kingdom and abide there. The work of the scathing flame which devours and destroys contamination is negative. We need the action of a vast creative force within us. We must have new life, new currents of sympathy brought into us, new aptitudes quickened, new fellowships cemented. A divine birth must take place and incorporate us into the kingdom. The seed of God must be in us if we are to come into the family life of God. The Holy Ghost alone can bring that to pass, and recast by His mystic transformations the entire character. All human methods deal with the corruptions of our fallen nature by a process of embalmment. They bring myrrh and spices, and try to keep the bad from becoming worse, and to hide that which is already vile. The Lord and Giver of life deals with us by a very different method. It is a resurrection He brings, or rather, a new life free from the defects of the old.

3. *Birth implies escape from narrow and ignoble limitations into freedom, high opportunity, a more royally proportioned and majestic life.*

Till birth takes place, the poor life there is seems to be akin to that which is meanest in the organic scale; large interests, manifold activities, varied and far-ranging pursuits and occupations being quite impossible. The subjection of the Jew consisted in this, not so much that he had to bow

the knee to the Roman conqueror, but that he was imprisoned within the senses, and that too with a divine vocation inwardly announcing itself. The life of physical wellbeing is too mean and small for man, be he Jew or Gentile. Nature herself seems to remind us of that fact. She cannot give sufficient scope for the growth of a spirit into which the seed of an infinite life has come. We need a realm in which to live, move, and breathe vast as God Himself. The purpose of our being, informed as that being is with divine as well as human principles, will be thwarted unless we come into this new world of light, liberty, spiritual consciousness, fellowship with the things above. Some modern teachers tell us to be true to nature, as though that would bring us into genuine breadth and richness of life. If in nature they include what the Bible calls grace, very well, we may heed them. But if by nature they mean the flesh and its desires and capacities, they are telling us to live through indefinite periods a life that is ignobly embryonic. We must be brought by a new birth into this wider and nobler realm, the realm of the kingdom that God has made ready for us. The man who has not yet been the subject of this great work of the Spirit is dwarfed, immured, a captive of darkness, the slave of another's will, and not master of himself and his own life.

Some people who have begun to experience this renewing grace, and have just tasted of the new life, have scarcely made of their life and its opportunities all they might. The young of the marsupials are born at a stage in which they are too tender and helpless for the hard world to which they have come, and are kept in pouches for the first few months of their life. And some people to whom we should be sorry to deny the name of

Christians live this kangaroo kind of life; they try and find for themselves a half-way house, a kind of stopping-place between darkness and light, bondage and liberty, the narrow womb in which they were conceived and the bright and glorious worlds which wait to welcome them. Oh, how much we lose by living this blind, dull, semi-carnal life, this life of worldly narrowness, servitude, and limitation! Some of us are perhaps half pleased to be in bondage to the world, and do not greatly desire a life of complete and immediate emancipation. But through this new birth the Spirit effects, we are brought into spheres where we can taste the sweets of freedom, into realms prepared to give the widest range to our thought, sympathy, undeveloped power, into associations adapted to call out into majestic exercise every capability with which our creation has endowed us.

4. *Birth implies the dawn of two sets of interacting vital functions, automatic and voluntary.*

There is a group of rudimentary functions which do not depend on the will, such as the pulsation of the heart, the action of the lungs, the circulation of the blood, the digestion of food. These things go on in sleep, and the will cannot well accelerate or retard them. Upon this lower reflexive life series of voluntary actions have to be built up, and the highest powers of the intellect and character developed. All the nobler processes of the brain need continuous acts of will to energise them, and the best part of our life is achieved by the play of conscious and voluntary faculties. Those reflexive acts set in motion at birth do not make up the sum-total of a man's life-history.

It is perhaps well to bear this fact in mind, because the popular conception of regeneration errs in two directions. Many are apt to think that the man who has been the

subject of this new birth will be a law-keeping automaton. The divine forces that have vitalised will keep him as true to the paths of righteousness as though he were a well-made watch. In the first stages of the new life the forces that work within us seem to sweep us on in spite of ourselves. A movement has been imprinted upon the soul like the law of a planet's orbit, and it scarcely seems possible for the soul to resist this impulse so instinctively obeyed. But by and by the man discovers he still has a will to wrestle with and to direct, and regeneration does not impart to him a movement towards righteousness irresistibly strong, unchanging, endowed with the qualities of clockwork. Then there is equally grave error in the opposite direction. This mystic change is so far minimised by some that the significance of it in the life is scarcely appreciable. The man who is assumed to possess this grace does not occupy a very much higher vantage-ground than the man who does not possess it. Both have to make up their minds to do what is right, and to be always making them up again, and it is just about as easy for the one as the other. To choose to be on God's side, that is the new birth. "Do you accept Christ?" says the rough and ready evangelist. "Then you are born again." It is well for us to remember that spiritual birth follows the analogy of the natural birth. Regeneration starts new functions within us that go on at least for a time in spite of ourselves. A normal energy of the Spirit diffuses itself through the judgment, the conscience, the affections. A process begins to which there is no interruption but that of deliberate and repeated sin. A pendulum is started which can only be stopped by forcible arrest. A keynote is struck and becomes wonderfully dominant in the after strains.

Yet those fervours, incitements, and illuminations which

come to us at all times, and in spite of ourselves, do not make up the whole of the new life. There are things which must needs be patiently learned. Temptations will still have to be resisted. The highest excellence of all is achieved through much discipline. We need to be ever bringing ourselves to a renewed dedication to God and His work. Yet the basis for all this is laid in that work of the Spirit within us, which goes on in our sleeping and waking hours alike. The new life, divine though it be, does not perpetuate itself in defiance of the man who is the subject of it. It must be carefully guarded, cherished, and sustained. The life which God gives in grace, like that which He gives in nature, may be neglected, misused, thrown shamefully away.

5. *The new birth implies the direct act and operation of that mysterious and life-giving sovereignty which is at the root of all being.*

We may train and preserve life when we have received it, and for the lack of training the first promise of life may degenerate into disease and deformity; but we are just as far from spontaneous generation in the natural as in the spiritual world. Unless the physical life be trained, the muscles will be flaccid, the sinews limp, the eye a nest of error and illusion, the brain a grave of stagnation. And so the spiritual life when given may fail through neglect, paralysis, disease. But we must have something to train, and that something must be God-communicated. We cannot generate the properties of vital holiness as we can generate steam and electricity out of existing elements ready to hand. To convey this new life is God's unshared prerogative. It must flow into us from the divine Spirit who is its fountain.

In dealing with this self-confident Pharisee, Christ uses metaphors which almost put the work of man out of con-

sideration. Speaking at a later stage to His disciples, He said they "must be converted and become as little children." That exhortation implies they had a part to play in humbling themselves, and the change there demanded is not traced back to what takes place before the beginning of consciousness. In dealing with Nicodemus, Christ, by the use of this idea of generation, implies that this estimable man can have no place whatever in effecting that change which is to bring him into the kingdom of heaven. It is a birth, and he must be dependent upon a mystic benefactor whose solitary prerogative it is to convey this transforming grace.

We sometimes speak as though "conversion" and "the new birth" meant exactly the same thing. But theologians remind us that the terms are not interchangeable, though the processes may be more or less associated and interwoven. Peter, following the usage of his Master, speaks as though the human factor predominated in conversion, for he exhorts the people to "repent and be converted." The new birth points the thought more specifically to a mystic power which underlies conversion, and of which conversion in its largest sense is an active outward expression. Conversion points to the change in a man's external conduct, which may be the antecedent, the collateral process, or the fruit of his regeneration, and which seems to hinge upon his own will. The one phrase points to the divine and the other to the human parts of a man's salvation. In some cases there may be a conversion without a new birth, for conversion simply means a "turning round."

Let us go to the vegetable world to illustrate the two phrases. Some plants may be turned in a specified direction by the hand of man, and forcibly bound into new

courses, whilst other plants twine by a property of their own. If a man were to twist generation after generation of some plants round a support put up for them, they would never acquire the habit of doing it for themselves. That is an example of a force which acts from without, and not through the life of the plant itself. The inclination other plants show for climbing is instinctive. They have acquired a mysterious habit of following the course of the sun. The spiral process is the outcome of life. Possibly it might be conveyed to certain plants which lack it by a process of cross fertilisation. If the habit is to become innate and show itself under all circumstances, it must go into the seed and begin with its earliest germination.

Cases occur in which a man turns round without doing so in obedience to the instincts of a new life. Even then, however, if the change is sincere, some indirect influence of the Spirit must have helped the process. But the man who has become the subject of the new birth turns to God, to light, and to righteousness by the forces of an innate vitality. This mystic wind of God has carried into his tender soul the elements of a new fertilisation, and the soul begins to germinate in wonderful forms. True holiness springs from an inward seed; no constraint of training will achieve it. To save Nicodemus from trust in himself and his own methods and disciplines, this teacher sent from God reminds him that all right and holy movement is the product of life, and life is the gift of a divine Spirit of infinite majesty. The Spirit operates in this new birth as truly as in the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, although, of course, for the communication of strictly finite powers. The Spirit must be in the dawn of all holy life, and round about its successive developments.

The question, Have we experienced the change which translates us into the kingdom of light and peace and righteousness? stands quite alone in its surpassing importance, and must not be thoughtlessly answered. Has the living sense of God and divine realities begun to dawn within us? Is this eternal sunshine on our daily pathway? Have we passed this vast crisis? Outside the kingdom are anarchy, disorder, spiritual pain, deranged perception, hatred, inevitable disaster, and these of ceaselessly growing magnitude. A miracle of the Spirit can alone take us into higher and happier realms. All professions of natural goodness, all proud claims to understand the things of God by the wisdom of this world, all reformations accomplished by the force of purely natural faculties, are met with Christ's irreversible demand for the remaking of the nature in its deepest fibres by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Nicodemus was a much better man than is popularly assumed. He touched the high-water mark of educated perception and finely disciplined natural character, and yet in the view of Him who "knew what was in man" he fell short. Here was the King of the kingdom, clothed with lofty spiritual attributes, grasping an unseen sceptre that should yet touch for its emancipation the enslavement and degradation of an entire world, wearing the crown of unknown dominions. Earth was His footstool, and all its kindreds should bow in penitent supplication before Him. Upon that footstool were resting even now the weary feet of this despised pilgrim from Galilee. Voices from heaven had attested His immaculate righteousness, and the unseen hosts of God were encircling His head. And yet Nicodemus thought him a saintly and gifted rabbi only, and perhaps half reproached himself for flattery when he addressed him

as "rabbi." The King was entering upon acts of surpassing interest in the history of the universe, and He needed workers. But as yet He could not summon Nicodemus to discipleship, for he was not in the kingdom, and could not see the face of the King. In spite of apparent breadth and candour he was essentially narrow. The blossom of one brief noon might just as well hope to drink in the light of a million suns as Nicodemus, apart from an act of regenerative power, hope to see the glory of the kingdom and its redeeming King. And if this wise and upright ruler of the Jews, justly honoured by his contemporaries, needed the quickening force of the brooding Spirit in his soul, we need it too.

True, this birth is not within our own power, but we can be passive and relinquish our hold of the old life by that unknown help which is already in us, and the Spirit's recreating act cannot possibly fail. That is perhaps what Christ meant by His allusion to the water of baptism in this discourse on the new birth. He did not and could not mean that the Spirit made a material element like water the one channel of His soul-renewing efficacy. Christ must have so spoken as to be understood by Nicodemus, and in the mind of Nicodemus the word would connect itself with the two things, the promise of the Spirit by the prophets under the symbol of water, and the repentance of which John's baptism had been the outward sign. By that prevenient grace which is in us from the beginning, we can all come to the repentance of which baptism is the divine token, and wait in helpless expectation for the higher gift. If we will consent to do that, we shall be swiftly brought to know and feel the secret of that transition from death to the life which is "life indeed."

V

The Sealing Spirit

THE SEALING SPIRIT

In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.—Eph. i. 13.

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.—Eph. iv. 30.

It is not easy to overstate the important change wrought by the Pentecost upon the early life of the Church. The descent of the Spirit left a more significant mark upon the tone, temper, faith of the early disciples than even the resurrection of Jesus and His ascent, as the disciples watched Him, to the right hand of God. Indeed, we perhaps ought to look upon the descent of the Spirit as a part of the ascension, an extension of that impressive fact into the region of man's spiritual experience and discernment.

The exhortation of St. Paul to these Ephesian believers illustrates this significant change. It implies that Christ's followers had advanced by leaps and bounds in all the finer perceptions and sympathies of the regenerated nature. The first groups of disciples held on with a most pathetic pertinacity to the thought of Christ's bodily presence in their midst, and for a time were almost indifferent to the coming of the Helper from on high who was to take Christ's place in their hearts, and be to them more even than Christ had been through three years of memorable friendship. The

promise did not instantaneously touch the imagination or call forth any appreciable degree of strong desire. But now the presence of this unseen companion, promised thirty years ago to lukewarm, dispirited, half-believing followers of the Man of Nazareth, has become such a reality to the Church in Ephesus and to other disciples, that the apostle can make it the basis of an effective and soul-moving appeal. The teaching, companionship, and abiding consolations of the Holy Spirit are as sensibly present to them as Christ's bodily form to the early disciples, and Paul addresses himself confidently to their strong dread of offending this unseen Friend. With the new life an instinctive love had come into them, which made them fear to grieve this veiled daily companion just as much as the twelve feared to grieve Jesus whilst He still walked amongst them.

The Pentecost, moreover, had produced an uncommon elevation of motive. Appeal need no longer be made to slavish, humiliating, and more or less selfish motives of fear. There are times when such motives are necessary, and the shame is not to the religion which is under the necessity of making terrifying appeals, but to the embruted and somnolent natures which need to be scourged into movement by pitiless threatening. The appeal now is to a purely disinterested motive, the fear of grieving another and repelling His sacred converse. The Spirit is ever creating such gracious bonds between Himself and those whom He renews and assures, that Paul can count upon an active and sensitive shrinking from the mere idea of affronting this unseen Friend who had come to tarry in the hearts of his converts.

The drift of the apostle's exhortation indicates an immense advance of ethical conception. Unedifying speech, unthinking chatter, which serves no useful end, and forgets alike the

sanctities of God and the sensibilities of our neighbour, may pain and repel this holy Friend and Companion of the soul, for it is in this connexion the exhortation stands. Faith and morals, and the natures through which both are revealed, have alike been revolutionised by the inspirations which came to the first disciples, when with one accord they were assembled together to wait for the promise of the Father, and now branch out into discriminations of unprecedented delicacy.

1. St. Paul reminds us of our peculiar obligation to the Spirit by pointing to *one of the primary characteristics of His work*. "Sealed" by His indwelling witness, and that not for a favoured moment only, but "unto the day of redemption."

This custom on which the Bible metaphor rests, of sealing letter, decree, edict, or title of possession, came from the East and is of obvious significance. It gives validity, assurance, legal effect to contract, declaration, or title-deed, and affirms proprietorship over the things upon which it is carried out. With the spread of education the personal signature comes to take the place of the old-fashioned seal. Some years ago a bundle of unsigned Bank of England notes was stolen. A note without that signature at the bottom of it familiar to most of us would be valueless. Religious life, endeavour, relationship, anticipation, borrow force and validity from the sealing of the Spirit.

The intermediate position in the religious history of God's saved people into which Paul puts this act of sealing clearly indicates its nature and purport. It stands midway between a man's return to God by the path of contrite faith and his full restoration to the glory and blessedness of heaven. "Sealed unto the day of redemption." The term redemp-

tion is one of the broadest and most elastic in the New Testament vocabulary. A cursory glance will show us that it does not merely denote the ransom Christ once offered for our salvation, nor even our experimental deliverance from the power of sin in the present life. The word covers the rescue of God's people from the last trace of sin's dominion in death and their elevation to share the glory of Jesus Christ on high. A similar comprehensiveness in the use of the word is to be found in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where Paul speaks in an ascending series of "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." If redemption points chiefly to Christ's work on the cross, we should expect it to be put before righteousness and sanctification; but because it is the wider term, Paul puts it last, and makes it include not only rescue from the moral perversity bred into human character by sin, but from every pain, abasement, and physical debility that has followed in its train. Whilst a solitary believer slumbers in the sepulchre, Christ looks upon his inheritance as but incompletely redeemed. It is till Christ's power has wrought through its last redemptive cycle and undone the remotest disaster of sin that the Spirit seals us. "Sealed unto the day of redemption."

This sealing by the Spirit implies *that the reconciliation in which we are so deeply interested is more or less secret and unseen.*

After long and anxious debate, the terms of peace between two belligerent powers are fixed. But, pending the formal ratification of the treaty, and possibly for some time after, the contending parties occupy the same positions on the field. Battery bristles over against battery, and gun is planted ready to answer gun, and regiment lies entrenched to check-

mate opposing regiment. The stream of war munitions continues to pour out towards the old scene of strife. The ground is still spotted over by huge encampments, and the peasant does not yet venture forth to sow his field, and to plant and prune his wasted vineyard. As a working fact, the soil has not been redeemed from the occupation of the invader. You can scarcely predicate the cessation of hostilities from what meets the eye. But to the commanders on either side the message has passed along the wires, and the genuineness of the message is vouched for by the cipher in which it is sent. If you gain admittance within the lines, you will find that an intimation of peace has been issued by the commander to his troops, and the intimation bears his official seal; but till tents are struck, and camp broken up, and ground given back once more to harvest and vintage, for sure and certain knowledge of the peace you are dependent upon the statement issued to the regiments under official seal. When the children begin to play about the homesteads, the peasants to till the hillsides, the nightingales to sing in the myrtle bush, the golden crops to sway in the warm winds, and the church bells to chime again through the valleys, there will be no need to prove the reality of the peace by the seal or official announcement of the fact. It will be then proved by every sight and sound and movement within the horizon.

For the present our personal reconciliation to God is an unseen fact, and is only attested by the indwelling Spirit which seals us. The heritage has not been fully and finally released and redeemed. The law yet seems to rumble with ominous curses. All the thunder has not died out from the firmament. Nature often seems hostile in the last degree. We are left under conditions that sometimes suggest that

awful and hopeless war is still going on, and yet the peace has been secretly sealed and its conditions ratified. One day the last thunder will have rolled itself into silence, the last bolt have hurtled through the air, the last hostile footstep be gone, and the stormless peace of eternity hide us in its sacred wings. The seal will then be needless.

This sealing *declares the relationship of dignity and privilege we sustain before God.*

In Oriental life the seal is necessary to accredit a man to the office his master may have bestowed upon him. With our quick methods of communication, Government departments accessible at any hour, and cabinet and other changes at once notified in official and unofficial gazettes, we can scarcely appreciate the importance of this symbol in less civilised countries. In territories where there are no telegraphs and railways, it may take a large portion of the year to promulgate and enforce the policy of the capital through outlying cities and hamlets. How are the people and the officials of a far off province to recognise the new viceroy or special commissioner who has been sent to govern them or to change the *personnel* of the local administration? The leading inhabitants have never seen his face before, photography is a foreign art, and illustrated papers are unknown. He is perhaps a complete stranger to those who are to be his colleagues in office. Under such uncertain conditions an impostor might conceivably grasp the reins of government; for to set up a bogus interregnum, where communications are so slow, is one of the easiest things in the world. The messenger of the throne is recognised by the imperial seal he bears. When he has fulfilled his term of office, let him go back to the palace, stand amidst its fabulous splendours, and move to and fro beneath the eye of his

imperial master, and there, at the centre of government once more, he will no longer need the seal, as a personal credential at least. His dignity is recognised and promptly acknowledged on all sides. The seal is indispensable when he has to cross the mountains or sail up unknown rivers, and go into districts where he must deal with semi-aliens.

And it is whilst we pass as strangers and pilgrims through the earth that we need the seal which attests our true standing before God. Our majesty is obscured, our bodies are inglorious and subject to decay, and our garments torn and stained with travel. The world knows us not, as it knew not God's greatest Son. Princes we may be, but our dress is fustian, our company mixed, and our home sometimes the bandit's cave. This witness of the Spirit to us, and then through our sanctified lives to the world, is the one sign that we are of the royal seed. When after the many storms and changes of life we take possession of the inheritance, and wear our titles before the universe, we shall no longer need that sealing of the Spirit which, in the meantime, is its earnest and pledge.

This sealing marks out the believer as *the subject of a specific providential care.* In this sense was it that circumcision stood to the Jews both for a sign and a seal. The rite proclaimed God's special proprietorship over the nation, and singled out its separate members for such defence, tender oversight, strenuous protection, as a father exercises over the little ones of his family. The sprinkled blood upon the doorposts of the houses was a seal assuring of security against those crushing and widespread woes that were alighting upon the Egyptians. The act of putting the mark upon the men who in the vision of Ezekiel "cried and sighed for the abominations of Jerusalem" was of similar significance. It separated them from calamities that were

shortly to fall upon the apostate city at the hands of the men who carried the fateful slaughter weapons.

And so with the sealing of the Spirit. It separates to special care and compassion those who bear this witness in their hearts and lives, proclaiming that they belong to God by higher and more sacred ties than those which bind the world at large to its Creator.

The seal is a token of proprietorship. You watch a ship as it is being loaded for a voyage, and amongst other cargo notice a number of boxes bearing a significant seal. These are not stowed away in the hold like consignments of common goods, but are taken to some place where they will be constantly watched by the responsible officers of the ship. The chests are chests of sealed treasure. Should the ship spring a leak and be endangered, after the safety of the passengers has been provided for, these sealed chests will be the first things to be put into the lifeboats. If pirates should succeed in boarding the vessel, the great fight will be round these sealed chests. Should the ship go down into the depths, these sealed chests will be the first things the divers will seek to bring back to the surface. The seal marks them out for special care and defence, and whatever human vigilance, foresight, and valour can do will be done to deliver them to the consignees. And so with that sealing of the Spirit affixed to sincere believers in Jesus Christ. They are subject to the same risks, vicissitudes, and temptations as other men ; but all that God's power can do to help and deliver them shall be done, and when the final catastrophe of death shall come into the horizon and bury all things in a common desolation, these shall be the first to be brought back again from the depths of earth. This special sealing marks out body and soul alike for God's special

possession and guardianship. His sealed servants shall never perish.

This sealing goes on to mark out those who receive it as *the types of a pure and incorruptible life.* The witness at last assumes a form which makes the believer in Christ an accredited light of those amongst whom his lot is cast. The sealing of inward peace known to the elect soul who possesses it is not always recognised by the world. The Spirit who sanctifies us, by the same act stamps us sons of God in the presence of our generation. In the synagogue at Capernaum Jesus spoke of Himself as "He whom God the Father had sealed." God seals us for our humbler vocation no less infallibly than He sealed the only begotten Son. He is incapable of the folly of sending into a disloyal, suspicious, and sense-ridden world an unsealed servant and message-bearer. And by the holy fruit which appears in our lives, the world, if it be not altogether thoughtless and unteachable, will be compelled sooner or later to see that we are of God. The Holy Spirit is ever working a continuous transformation and ennoblement within us which is the distinctive mark of the children of the kingdom. Here in these natures there are perilous materials for the development of the old passions. Even when we reach our highest, there are the hidden risks of error and disobedience. We are charged to the very teeth with perilous susceptibilities. But in the meantime the Spirit of God, if cherished, wooed, and obeyed, will do for us that which will ere long be a spontaneous function of the resurrection body. In the last day of redemption holiness will become organic, for the outward vesture of the life will be spiritual. The thought and sympathy and consciousness which ally us to God will then become just as inseparable a part of the

self as sensation is now. But till we have bodies spiritual by their very constitution, we must needs be made pure and flesh-despising and God-like by the work of the indwelling Spirit of God. In our present state holiness is inspired and not organic. Lacking the indwelling Spirit and its fruits, there is no sign to mark us out to the eye of the world as born of God, and possessed of celestial kindred and citizenship. When we shall have come to bear in our transfigured flesh the power and potency of all divine qualities, this sealing will be needless. Till that day of perfect redemption dawns, we cannot afford to despise this high signature. "Sealed unto the day of redemption,"—sealed for our own assurance, and also for a witness to the world. And the sealing, after all, is one. We ourselves look upon the under side of the seal,—the joy unspeakable passing into love and consecration; whilst the world looks on the obverse side,—the life of divine charity springing from motives quickened by this peace-creating Spirit.

2. The apostle reminds these Ephesian believers of *the sensitive disposition of that Spirit to whom they owe so much*, and bids them take heed lest they unhappily grieve Him. Whatever weakens or discredits or cancels that witnessing work within us which is His delight is a profound offence before Him.

This sealing is identified with peace, joy, and confidence in the heart of believers, and *He is stung with a keen inward jealousy when He sees us choose the little, illusive gratifications of evil-doing and evil-speaking* rather than those solid contentments afforded by His mystic witness. The preceding exhortation deals with such sins as falsehood, anger, dishonesty in all its forms, graceless and unedifying conversation. Wherever such sins have sway, divine anger is

provoked and His joy-giving work immediately arrested. Those living in any degree of unrepented sin He cannot certify as possessors of the Father's favour, for that would be to make His own work self-contradictory, inasmuch as He is appointed to testify of the wrath abiding upon those who live in sin. The wrath of God and joy through the Holy Ghost, like fire and water, can never be in the same place at the same moment of time. Much as He yearns to comfort the woe-begone children of men, He cannot do it where there is persistent sin. If He did so, the accord between Himself and the Godhead from whose bosom He comes would be as unreal as that between Isaac and Rebecca in the treatment of their sons. When He watches our folly and infatuation in preferring the miserable, short-lived satisfactions of wrong to the pure, bounding, and inexhaustible joy that comes to the believer through His sealing, He cannot but be pained. More than that, sin puts to new shame the very Son whom He came to glorify and extol in the experiences of His disciples, and His very witness to the Son is arrested by the first conscious sin not immediately followed by repentance. All such moral interruptions to His blessed work must bring grief to His holy and loving nature.

And the Spirit is also *grieved by whatever discredits His testimony concerning the Father and the Son to the world at large.* He seals the believer as an apostle to those who are without, by developing the hidden lineaments of that image in which man was first made, and showing, through an ever-growing likeness to the divine character, that he is a child of God and a kinsman of Jesus Christ. One disfigured by such sins as those here denounced might be the offspring of an erring Olympian god, but not of the

pure and unblemished Being who cannot look upon sin. Any flagrant obliquity in the believer's life is a mockery of the seal which the Holy Spirit is seeking to affix and impress there. Indeed, the Spirit's seal is obscured and effaced by all acts which are averse from the dispositions of His own holy nature. He is ever assimilating us to His own spotless qualities, as a sign by which the world may know that we are children of a family named from the one sacred and eternal Fatherhood, and when we corrupt afresh what He has hallowed and made new, He is touched to the quick. To degrade and diabolise again the natures which He is lifting up into the divine likeness and attesting before the world as born from above is to wound Him in ways we do not conceive. Every sin is the devil's effacing smear upon His sacred handiwork.

The Spirit is also *grieved when we doubt the privilege and possibility of His mystic attestation*, and under-estimate its value in our life and service. It may be that we have often alienated the Spirit for a time, and deprived ourselves of His gracious solace, because we have attributed our own lack to some capricious determination in the will of the Spirit Himself rather than to acts and tempers of our own which have estranged Him. How often do we speak as though it might not be the will of a loving nature like His to seal with indisputable signs every true believer in Jesus Christ! Why, it is a part of His very work in glorifying Christ to make us participate in Christ's fulness of favour. The witness of the Spirit is no unmeaning satisfaction we may be content to forego without suffering serious spiritual loss in ourselves. We cannot share Christ's life in any perfect sense of the term without it. It is no slight indignity we put upon His love when we assume that we are straitened

in Him and not in ourselves. It is a travesty of His character and office when we speak as though His inscrutable counsel and decree gave rise to those questionings and imperfect spiritual satisfactions which are bred only of our own defective loyalty and faith. Can we imagine He administers a redemption with any element of partiality in it?

Do we possess the riches of the full assurance of knowledge? Is this inward testimony always bright within us? Does it not often fluctuate,—fluctuate because of dubious tempers in us from which we still need to be saved. The Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, and the earnest must be held till that to which it looks is made over into our final possession. If we could have a candid statement of the experience of many sincere Christians upon this question, would it not come to this, that the inward witness is at best but like that of the revolving light seen far out at sea? You get the flash of illumination at intervals, and then there come long spaces of darkness before the light shoots forth again across the wave. Now this Spirit of light finds His symbol, not in a revolving light at the river bar or on some rocky point along the coast, but in the glory of the Shechinah, which shone in the inner sanctuary with unabated splendour for ages. Let us dwell in this light. It is our privilege. The measure of the gift of the Spirit to Christ is the measure of His gift to us who give ourselves up to Christ's authority and expect to receive all things for Christ's sake.

VI

Assurance and Temperament

ASSURANCE AND TEMPERAMENT

The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit.—Rom. viii. 16.
My conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost.—Rom. ix. 1.

Within comparatively recent times the blessing of assurance was not looked upon as the common birthright of all believers in the Lord Jesus. It was said to be the distinction of the few; and in the case of the few even, the consciousness of divine acceptance was assumed to be a product of common faculties exercised upon the saving truths presented in the Bible, rather than to be an immediate creation of the Spirit of God in the soul. The belief that assurance is possible to all true believers in Jesus is now practically universal in the Churches which are free from the taint of sacerdotalism.

Little is said by Roman Catholics and High Anglicans upon the grace of assurance and the other works wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. That indeed is not to be wondered at; for the lay member of the Church is treated as though he were a mere minor or infant, and had no need to pry into the stamps and signatures and title-deeds which concern his settlements, but must accept implicitly the oral asseverations of executors and trustees. The assurance of the Spirit and the sponsorship of the priest inevitably conflict with each other, and the one or the other must be more or less

depreciated by the competition. If the priest is in truth a surety for the absolution of the penitent who unreservedly commits his cause into official hands, and the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ is an unconditional pledge and an indestructible substratum of salvation, the importance of this witness is sensibly minimised. Why should I be jealous over my inner life, and cherish tempers of fine spirituality, so that I may be in a condition to enjoy this witness, if I may have a rough and ready assurance upon much easier terms? And, on the other hand, if God Himself become a witness of salvation within me, why should I not be free to think of an official priesthood as of comparatively limited and subordinate importance? As we possess this inward witness, the needlessness and impertinence of all sacerdotal pledges and guarantees will become more and more obvious. It will be thus seen at a glance that the position of the sacerdotal Churches on this question is what it always was; and it would be little less than fatal to their own pretensions if they were to yield to that wave of religious thought which has made all evangelical Churches one in their proclamation of this blessed privilege.

In this decade of financial bubbles, piratical directorates, and an ignorant public, companies have been formed to insure investments. Such companies, however, would not be likely to do a large amount of business if each investor understood the character of the undertaking in which he was about to put his money and could weigh to a fraction the moral and professional competence of those at the head of the undertaking. It is the widespread ignorance of the investing public which gives these "investment assurance societies" their opportunity.

And it is the lack of the unction of the Holy One which

teaches all things, the dearth of inward light and assurance, the absence of this divine testimony itself, which leads nominal Christians to cast themselves upon those Churches which fulfil in the religious world the function fulfilled in the financial world by "investment assurance companies." "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." It is the nominal Christian who gives the wide opportunity and occasion to sacerdotal corporations which profess to guarantee the salvation of the soul. The days of high ecclesiasticism would be past if Christians lived up to their privilege and had a steadfast experience of this divine inward testimony. No wonder the privilege is so little taught and enforced by the prelatical Churches.

Great and welcome changes have come over all bodies of evangelical Christians in their attitude towards this question. In actual experience much needs to be attained; but in theory at least they have come into line with the leaders of the great eighteenth century revival. Many converging tendencies of religious thought have led up to this.

The special emphasis now put upon the doctrine of the divine Fatherhood has helped to promote the all but unbroken consensus of belief in this common privilege. It is true that the doctrine of the all-embracing Fatherhood of God has been pushed to a perilous extreme, and has been made to imply universal salvation through an indefinite series of probations. But we welcome the foundation principle apart from the too flattering inference drawn from it, for it has softened those harsher views of the divine sovereignty which magnified His power at the expense of His righteousness and love. It is hard to find a man who believes in the reprobation of a single human soul by an eternal decree; and if a soul is not predestined to perdition in the life to come, it is

obvious that it cannot be kept in darkness, condemnation, and uncertainty by the fixed purpose of God in the present life. There is no respect of persons with God, and the grace designed for one in connexion with this common salvation is designed for all. It is a necessary corollary to the truth of the universal Fatherhood that sons are equal in privilege.

And then the more perfect justice done within recent years to the humanity of Jesus Christ has helped the prevailing faith in the common possibility of assurance. The supernatural aspects of His work and person have passed more or less into the background, and He has come into homeliest intimacy with us. He not only represents in His immaculate walk and conversation that holiness which should characterise the children of God, but in His immediate knowledge of the Father's approbation, and the high gladness which sprang from it, He represents the common privilege of His brethren and disciples. He cannot impart to them His peace without bringing them to participate in that consciousness of the Father's love which was the very groundwork of His peace. He is the type of what those united to Him are to become in direct and soul-steadying insight into the Father's favour. He is not sent to dazzle us with His supernatural endowments, but to set forth before our eyes the spectacle of a Son upon whose head the eternal smile was ever resting, and whose blessed assurance, save in one last dark moment of mystery, was never veiled by a cloud. Christ cannot come so near to us as within recent years, and touch us with His humanness in such countless ways, without constraining us to feel that He makes His privilege ours, and is a sober type of the blessedness we reach through our union with Him.

Those higher views of conscience which are asserting themselves, and which make it the very voice of God in the human soul, have more than neutralised that denial of the direct witness of the Spirit in personal salvation common amongst the opponents of the doctrine in the controversial days. Half a century ago, the definition of coal as buried and packed up sunlight might have been justly applied to an average theologian's view of the conscience. It was a mysterious material in which a certain amount of the ethical knowledge God gave to our first parents was stored away for after use. We believe now that conscience is not indirect, but direct, living sunlight coming straight down from God. Evolution, whilst apparently hostile to faith in some directions, has given us a new conception of the active immanence of God in nature; and we feel He cannot be less truly immanent in the highest faculty of the human soul. Our researches in comparative religion have compelled us to believe more distinctly in a light lighting every man that cometh into the world. In some degree the very voice of God is heard in the high moral and religious teaching of pagan writers as well as in those whom He inspired to write the Bible. And we cannot put the Christian conscience upon a lower level than this. It is an immediate inspiration from God, and those who once denied that there was any direct witness of God to a believer's acceptance, other than the comforting inference to which his own conscience and reason contributed, are now compelled to admit the direct witness by the very fact that they make conscience, and rightly so, an organ of immediate revelation from God. When peace is instilled into the conscience, that involves the direct witness, inasmuch as the Spirit has been a presence within the conscience through all the stages of its

past movement, and conscience has lived through His in-breathing. Perhaps the danger now is lest the indirect witness of the Spirit should be forgotten and ignored. The very controversies which are going on about the inspiration of the Bible have driven some of our fellow-Christians to insist more strongly than in the past upon the evidential value of Christian experience. It is everywhere felt and acknowledged that mere natural intuitionalism cannot become a ground of authority in matters of religious belief; but if there be the direct witness of the Spirit to the truth of salvation and to our relation to that truth, a new centre of authority with new sanctions forms itself within us. Discussions about the degree of inspiration in the Bible and the authenticity of some of its books will not have been an unmixed evil if men are cast back upon the immediate ministry and teaching of the Spirit, and come to seek, possess, and prize more widely than in the past this direct inward witness.

More than one New Testament text recognises a double witness to our adoption, that of the Spirit of God and that of our own spirits. Like the two notes which make up a chord of music, they may sometimes so blend together in the human consciousness as to be scarcely distinguishable from each other. The strain is one, but the notes struck in producing the strain are two; and we need to pause and study ourselves, and analyse this persuasion springing up within us, before we can tell its constituent parts.

This twofold witness seems to have *its forecast and beginning in the compound nature of saving faith.* Such faith springs up out of the interaction of two forces, the one human, the other divine. It is an act to which will and judgment, reason and affections have all contributed. A

man has to set himself to believe, to bring all the powers of his nature into play, so that he may fulfil the conditions which are demanded from him. Yet these things by themselves can never produce saving faith. That is specifically attained by the operation of God upon a mind already putting forth its best power to do the work enjoined. But the Spirit, who has directly helped thus far, does not surely hide Himself or withdraw from the renewed heart when faith has been achieved. His presence becomes more conspicuously asserted to the consciousness, and He abides to follow up His first work by approving the faith He has helped and persuading the soul of its complete acceptability to God in Jesus Christ.

We see something like this *double witness in the life of Jesus Christ the pattern* Man. A sense of the Father's favour and approval must have permeated His entire consciousness from the beginning. But to that was superadded a separate witness direct from the presence of the Father in heaven; and that witness was repeated at the crucial epochs of His life, to comfort and strengthen Him as well as to accredit Him to the faith of others. And if the voice of Christ's human reason and conscience were not enough to tranquillise and equip Him for His tasks, we must surely need to have the witness of the divine Spirit conjoined with that of our own spirits, if we are to know in deed and in truth that we are the children of God, and be true and strong for His service.

As you look at the clock in the tower of some great public building, you remember that behind the gilt letters of the dial there is an elaborate mechanism which moves the fingers. But you also remember that, after all, everything does not rest upon the exact weight and rhythm of the

pendulum that swings there, or the faultless going-order of the well-cleaned wheels. It is possible for the local mechanism to be at fault and to vary in its time-keeping virtues, and the citizens are not left to the mercy of its supposed inerrancy. At noon a gun is fired or a ball made to fall, or some other delicate adjustment is brought into play by an electric current sent direct from the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, the centre of scientific precision and faultless and authoritative reckoning. There is local mechanism fairly trustworthy in its way, but that is guaranteed and controlled by the message of absolute astronomical truth.

And so the faculties of the man who has been renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost come under immediate divine guidance and control. It is not the mere mechanism of finite reason or conscience which strikes the golden hour of a soul's acceptance. There is an immediate announcement of the fact by influences flashing down from God's throne. Over and above that consciousness, arising out of the natural powers of mind and will and heart, there is a new spiritual consciousness awakened by the operation of new forces within us,—the direct witness of the Spirit of God to the fact of our adoption.

Now it is obvious that when two voices blend, each must have its part in determining the impression made upon the ear. Where two colours cross each other's pathway, the one will temper or modify the sensation conveyed by its companion to the optic nerve. Where two different fibres are interwoven into the same fabric, the impression made upon the fingers as they pass over it will partake to some extent of the qualities of both. And when two savours are mixed into the food tasted by the palate, the one will temper the other. And so is it with the impression made upon the

consciousness of God's forgiven people by the conjoint work of these two testimonies. The two will react upon each other, and the modulated qualities of each will appear in the common product.

This inward assurance implies a divine revelation, and some of its features will therefore resemble those of the book which contains God's revelation to man. Before the problems involved in the inspiration of the Scriptures were brought under survey, men were accustomed to hold a mechanical theory which assumed that the natural faculties of seer or singer or prophet were entirely passive whilst a voice from heaven spake and its words were chosen in heaven. The temperament and personality of the holy man God used to speak or to write His message were entirely ignored. His mind was treated as though it were the receiver of a telephone or the membrane of a phonograph upon which the divine voice indented itself. We now perceive that it was living, human souls, with living qualities and living attributes, God touched; and because of their co-operation, the message, whilst authoritatively divine, had human traits and characteristics in it. We can distinguish the poets of the Bible as clearly from each other as we can distinguish Keats from Wordsworth or Tennyson from Browning. We can distinguish the historians of the Bible from each other as palpably as we can distinguish Hume from Macaulay or Carlyle from Freeman. If we could have looked upon the faces of Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Peter, John, Paul, we should not have found their faces more incisively individual than we find the styles of their writings. The Spirit took up into Himself their natural human qualities, or, if we like to put it the other way, blent Himself with their separate types of genius and temperament; and yet in

every case the message is in no degree invalidated, but is felt to be so utterly divine in its sanctions, that it may be described, not as the word of man, but, as it is in deed and in truth, the word of God.

And so the Spirit of God and our own spirits alike contribute notes and tones and accents to this blended witness as it takes shape in our spiritual consciousness. The assurance is not less divine and authoritative because of the accidental human qualities which attach to it, and it must not be despised or discredited because something may enter into it which seems a part of ourselves.

For the right understanding of our experience we need to bear in mind that the form of assurance may be sensibly influenced by those mental habits which we describe under the terms disposition, temperament, personality. Some men co-operate with the movement of the Spirit in their hearts by a process of ideality and some by a process of pure logic, some through the sensibility of the affections and some through the activity of the conscience.

Many around us *think in pictures*, and find themselves helpless if confronted with a series of abstract ideas. Probably there are entire races in that condition of mental development. They visualise to the inward eye every thought which is presented to them, if indeed their language does not already do it for them. They are like the child brought up with pictorial alphabets and kindergarten toys, whose entire education revolves for the time round gorgeously painted figures and models of all living and dead things. A principle must be illustrated, worked out through a series of picturesque situations, focussed into the characters of a dramatic plot or novel. They are unable to grasp the ultimate and essential truth of things without

the help of imagery. They become adepts in mental arithmetic by conceiving mental diagrams of the figures and setting up associations that address the eye. For them the continuity of thought means an interminable panorama unfolding itself before their view. And argument must be turned into a dialogue before they can feel its force, and the colloquists must use not a little action and emphasis. Such natures inevitably and automatically dramatise whatever addresses itself to the apprehension. Now for the salvation of men of this type God perhaps asserts Himself as an unseen presence of benignity, a soft breath of peace stealing through the storm, a sense of undefinable light breaking upon midnight darkness. At once the human faculties with their instinctive habits come into play. This unknown benignity, bearing in its consolations upon the troubled conscience, associates itself with the gracious and pitiful face of the Crucified; the soft breath of peace, Æolian in its softness, moulds itself into accents of articulate absolution; the instealing light is the gleaming raiment or the encircling halo of the King of saints, who has come to accept the bowed penitent at the mercy seat. The form of the witness may be determined by temperament, but the authority of God is present in it, notwithstanding the special stamp the human mind itself may have unconsciously put upon it. The divine and the human blend in this comforting testimony.

Another man is more *distinctly logical in his habits of thought*. It seems to him that he has reached this priceless grace of assurance by a process of reasoning, and he is tempted at times to think that it may be less sensibly and immediately a revelation from God than in the other case. He has struggled into faith through the steps of a syllogism with the universal love of God for its major premiss. There

is something unmistakably divine in the persuasion he feels; and yet he can scarcely tell at what point the divine has introduced itself, and if he tries to analyse his experience of assurance, it looks as though this sense of salvation were an uninspired inference from the word of promise contained in the covenant or from the all-redeeming love declared by the cross. And yet at an earlier or a later stage the process has been supernaturally helped. Some unknown power has half lifted him from the earth and swept him through the steps of his evangelical syllogism. It has been his life-long habit to be cautious, perhaps even sceptical, to form slow conclusions, to look before he leaps, to work a thing out for himself; but in this case he can scarcely see the milestones of the sublime argumentation to which he has surrendered himself, and yet he has an unaccountable confidence in his own happy conclusion. His faculties have been moving with new swiftness, and the breath of God has filled the wings on which they have soared. The assurance has not been automatically dramatised, because that would be entirely foreign to the man's past habits of thought. But it is just as divine. The witness of the Spirit merges itself into that of the man's own spirit, and the form it takes in this association is more or less determined by the mental instincts and training of the past. But it is in no sense a mere human inference from inspired data. God is active and immanent in all these operations of the believing heart. There is a direct witness of God to the fact of personal salvation, however largely a man's own disposition may mould the type of assurance as it emerges into the consciousness or is described for the comfort and edification of others.

In some natures, particularly in the stages of infancy and youth, *God's presence seems to address itself to the emotions.*

There is an instinctive yearning for a perfect and absolute object of love, trust, worship. A vast void waits to be filled with the apprehension of infinite excellence, infinite sympathy, infinite friendship. The heart cannot rest away from God. Till some unknown secret of love is distilled there, stabs of sudden pain are felt, grievous and incurable wounds, strain and distress of the sensibilities. The peace of home, the accord of marriage, the wealth of far-ranging friendship, only palliate the trouble for a time. At last a strange power of loving God springs up within the fevered, distraught, and half-famished affections. That implies and guarantees an accomplished reconciliation. The persuasion comes by the pathway of these tender, sensitive, love-craving conditions of temper, and seems to grow out of them. But it is the great Spirit Himself who witnesses in and through the affections. The heart-chords respond to some vibration in His own nature. A God who irresistibly makes Himself an object of love must be a God who is already reconciled. An assurance wrought in this way is just as authoritatively divine as though proclaimed by a voice from the skies.

Another nature is distinctly ethical. A man finds himself possessed of the passion for righteousness. His thoughts run much upon questions of conduct and its regulating principles, and he is drawn to the things that are pure and noble and of good report, and led to dedicate all the forces of his nature to their achievement. The acceptance of these high ethical standards, however, plunges him into self-recrimination, and casts him again and again into the lowest hell. But at last the assurance springs up within him that by an unseen ministry of grace he is put right with that better self within him which reflects a divine law. New powers have dawned in his life and new hopes of perfection

glow in his heart. Conscience is spurred, and yet the stimulus brings no pain, for he finds himself in harmony with heaven. Now, although this assurance is wrought through those moral senses which have ever been the most active part of the man, the assurance itself is direct and divine. The moral senses have been revitalised and quickened to exuberant healthiness by the direct operation of Him who in the beginning implanted them. "The conscience bears witness in the Holy Ghost."

Of course we must not suppose that these characteristics exist in isolation from each other and in entirely different persons. Dramatic instinct, an element of logic, emotion, moral sympathy, are present in every kind of degree and proportion in men and women of varying temperaments; and the Holy Spirit may work His witness through any one of these elements or the whole. In producing this chord of perfect and God-breathed music in the experience of the saints, He may couple or disjoin the many parts of man's nature, operating upon them in their combination, or operating upon them in their separateness, and effecting His persuasion of salvation through one set of faculties at one stage of the life and through another at a later stage. He attests our sonship in many forms.

We have spoken of this priceless witness under the metaphor of a musical chord. To produce a perfect chord two things are necessary. The things brought into play must be *attuned to each other*. Unless there is this perfect adjustment when the notes are struck, instead of the faultless chord you will have jarring, dissonance, torture. So our wills must be brought into agreement with the will of the Spirit. We must forsake all sin, and give ourselves up to His skilful modulation and adjustment. He will put us

right with the God and the heaven from which He has come. And then a chord can only be produced when *the two strings are touched at the same moment of time.* The action must be simultaneous. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." Whilst the Spirit is still with us and works upon us, whilst He still waits to glorify the Son in our hearts and unfold the unsearchable mysteries of His grace, we must believe, and we shall have at once within our souls that blended witness, that mystic chord which shall swell at last into the music and gladness of the upper temple, where God looks with unclouded approval upon those who stand day and night before His throne.

VII

Assurance and the Larger Hope

ASSURANCE AND THE LARGER HOPE

And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.—GAL. iv. 6.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.—ROM. viii. 14.

LUKE, who wrote under the direct personal influence of the Apostle Paul, traces back the descent of our Lord to Adam, whom he significantly declares to be the son of God. By that notable phrase he seems to intimate the common inheritance in the gospel possessed by all the descendants of Adam, however widely separated in speech, history, and racial tradition. The fact that it was from such an elevation primeval man fell, tends, moreover, to make the mystery of his redemption less incredible. The sonship, it is true, had become futile, inoperative, a dead letter; and man's lapse from such an august estate, far from constituting any just title to clemency, could only add to his guilt and condemnation. But Luke, reflecting in all probability the opinion of his great leader and companion, seems to imply that it is a foregleam of the incarnation, and furnishes a point of affinity in human nature on to which God's redemptive processes join themselves.

Modern advocates of what is called the larger hope assume that this relationship is indestructible, and contains some

vague pledge of man's universal recovery to a divine life. He who is a son is a son for ever, and nothing can unmake the relationship, or finally exclude him from the practical compassions of the Fatherhood which begat him. But, after all, is the sonship which takes its rise in the outflow of the Creator's own life into man necessarily persistent and age-enduring? May not a time come when little is left of it but the traditional name? and that name itself may be a curse and an occasion of aggravated reproach and woe. The agony column of the daily newspaper proves that fathers and mothers may do their utmost to help and reclaim wayward and wandering sons, and do it in vain. Men sometimes put themselves into positions from which the fondest affection and all but boundless resource are unable to extricate them. The drunken and gambling heir to an earldom, who turns beach-comber in New Guinea, or drives a stage-coach in the wilds of a burnt-up Australian colony, is a son still, but his descent and patent of nobility count for little or nothing at all.

Christ told the Jews that they were the children of the devil, and did the works of their father. If the argument is good for anything, we should be able to apply it in every direction. Is that terrible and deep-reaching relationship irreversible for both Christ's Jewish contemporaries and liars and would-be murderers of a later generation? It is just as legitimate to argue it is so in the one case as in the other. We are all like half-castes, in whom the forces of a double and antipathetic ancestry meet, and are compelled by the development of our life to detach ourselves from the one set of tendencies and identify ourselves with the other. Savagery will push out the refinement in the blood, or the refinement will subdue the savagery. Man has it in his own

power to attenuate and extinguish either relationship, and to so deal with these germs of inherited tendency in his nature that he shall become altogether good, or irreparably evil. It is true this sonship in which man's capacity for a divine life roots itself is older in point of time; but, no less than the other relationship with the predisposition to sin it implies, it may be completely aborted. It must surely be a task of inconceivable difficulty to develop again that which has shrunk into a mere vestige or rudiment. Far easier is it to open out new faculties in the sphere of either the physical or the spiritual life. In nature there is rarely if ever a recovery of organs which have passed for generations out of active service, leaving mere unresponsive tissue behind.

In the writings of St. Paul, and especially in the chapters before us, we are reminded that the privileges of sonship can only be recovered through the unique process of human redemption. It is vain for man to look with pride upon the surviving traces of the sonship which took its rise in an original creation, for the rights and privileges of that sonship have been lost, and can never be brought back by purely natural methods and evolutions. To make the name mean anything but shame, retrogression, a curse, it needs that great miracle which is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Our elder Brother takes away the bar between God and His apostate sons, and the privileges they thenceforth enjoy they enjoy through their union with Jesus Christ alone. We are in no valid sense members of a divine family by our descent from Adam, who was at first "the son of God," but by our fellowship with Christ, who brings us back into the household, and makes His Father our Father once more.

In some of the countries of the East, if a high official or a prince of royal blood has been charged with a crime, he must be kept a prisoner in his palace till the rank he enjoyed is first taken away by an imperial edict, and then only can he be tried and sentenced in the common courts. It is after he has been reduced to the common level that the criminal law is free to deal with him according to his deserts. The old dispensation seems to have filled some such end as that in the government of God. The law shut man up under sin, and took away his rank as one of the sons of the Most High. The best saints scarcely rose above the level of bondage and fear, and necessarily lacked the filial consciousness and freedom. By His great act of sacrifice, Christ takes away the condemnation resting upon those who had borne the name of sons to their own reproach and discredit, and gave them power to re-enter the lost relationship, and enjoy the high privileges clustering around it. But even this act of common redemption did not make men all consciously and indefectibly members of the divine family. This new possibility of sonship might in some cases prove itself as ineffectual as the sonship which arose with the first creation. It becomes a basis only for the work of the Spirit in quickening us to a sense of our sonship, and fitting us for its high glory and blessedness.

The Spirit comes to crown and attest the sonship of all who open their hearts to His gracious operations. We are recovered to our first estate by this ministry of peace and consolation. The Spirit of Jesus is sent into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. He who sheds filial gladness into the blessed nature of the only begotten Son comes to impart it to us. It is a wonderful thought that He who voiced all the music of the Father's approval in the soul

of Jesus comes to dwell in us and to make us share the peace of Him whose serene presence was sunshine wherever He went. What marvellous messages of love must He have borne when He mediated between the Father and the lowly suffering Son, and He comes to echo those messages into us who are accepted in the Beloved. We receive not the revived instincts and discernments and serenities attaching to the relation in which Adam stood in the days of his innocence and simplicity, but the Spirit who dwelt in Christ, and who comes to infix within us the same experiences of unfaltering gladness.

One of George Eliot's most skilful books deals with the fortunes of a young man who for many years had been left in entire ignorance of his parentage. When a mere infant, Daniel Deronda was placed by his Jewish mother, afterwards known as the Princess Halm-Eberstein, in the care of Sir Hugo Mallinger, with the instruction that he should be allowed to know nothing whatever of his Jewish birth and blood. At times he thought this English gentleman, who had inspired within him not a little affection, must surely be his own father. He scanned the family portraits to see if he could solve the riddle, but no reflex of those features appeared in his own. When he went to Eton, one of the boys "talked about home and parents to Daniel, and seemed to expect a like expansiveness in return." "To speak of these things was like falling flakes of fire to the imagination." One day, when Sir Hugo asked him if he would like to be a great singer, he gave up the cherished thought that this indulgent but mysterious guardian could be his father; for no English gentleman, he reasoned, would think of allowing his own boy to follow the career of a professional singer. Now this atmosphere of secrecy in

which he had been brought up was cruel, and might have been attended with grave disaster to the disposition and character, for the lad scarcely knew upon whom to bestow his pent up affection. The delineation is not intended as a study in the growth of character, but to show probably that not a few of the sentiments of Jewish life and religion are in the blood, however little a young Jew may be told about his own ancestry and family connexions. When, after the lapse of years, he had an interview with his mother, we are told that it seemed as if he were "in the presence of a mysterious fate, rather than a longed for mother," and he did not hesitate to say, "I have always been rebelling against the secrecy that looked like shame."

It seems scarcely credible, but there are those who assert that God deals with us after no better fashion than that of the Jewish mother, who had been thwarted in her ambition to become a great singer and have Europe at her feet, and who resolved to put her tiny, unloved child beyond the pale of Jewish ideas. It is best that God should deal with us upon a principle of secrecy throughout the days of our earthly pupilage, and let us know as little as possible about our relation to Himself. If God were to leave us to mere guesses about our possible place in His family, He would not only be robbing us of the highest motive to right-doing and spiritual perfection, but He would be imposing upon us needless pains and humiliations, and cankering the very heart of our gladness.

In one case in ten thousand where a child is taken from vicious and criminal parents and placed in a Christian home, it may be well to hide facts that would make him feel his birth placed him under a ban, and Fate would make him an outcast; but can we conceive of any reason why the Spirit

should not come with His attesting cry into the hearts of all God's children? Is it ever necessary that adoption into the divine family should be a secret transaction, jealously veiled from the man who is the subject of it? We shall be able to find many and forcible reasons why God's grace should be made known to those whom God forgives and sets on high; but let us pause for a moment to ask if there is anything to be said on the other side?

Those who decry the privilege of assurance, and pronounce the profession of it fanaticism, say that the man who asserts that he is a child of God and an heir of heaven and knows it, will be tempted to think himself better than his neighbour, and slip into reckless and unwatchful tempers. Such an argument is based upon the peculiar theology of the Pharisees, and assumes as its major premiss that the sonship attested by the Spirit of God is something a man achieves for himself. But how can a privilege which is open to all lead any man to think that he is better than his neighbour? Men do not give themselves airs because the sun shines on their heads, and the scent of the sea and the forest mixes itself with the blood, and flowers blow about their pathway, and the blue quivers with lark-songs. They never grow arrogant through that which they possess in common with their fellows, even should many in the crowd be unmusical and inartistic and indifferent to the exhilarations of nature. And those who realise that this privilege rests upon grace, and is enjoyed through faith alone, cannot possibly be under any special temptation to become proud. The more we enjoy through the bounty of another rather than as the recompense of our own deserts, the deeper will our humility become. As God adds mercy to mercy, and crowns the whole with this consummate grace, that will compel us to feel more and

more our own innate unworthiness. To be authoritatively certified that he was a child of God, would, of course, puff up a self-righteous man; but it is quite inconceivable that a Pharisee should receive such an assurance; and if a man slips back in any degree into the Pharisee, his assurance will be marked by a proportionate obscurity and depreciation. This assurance is only a conditional guarantee of final salvation; for the angels in heaven could not have had an unconditional guarantee, inasmuch as some amongst their ranks fell. It might tempt a child to laziness, frivolity, profligate habits, if he were to know too soon the exact worth of the possessions into which he would come at his majority; but the day is not far distant when that knowledge will be fitted to deepen a sense of his responsibility. This assurance communicated by the Spirit, far from tempting to recklessness, will make a thoughtful man feel that he has something to guard, something to live for, something constraining him to vigilance and self-denial and prayer, lest he let slip his high privilege. Of all the beings upon this planet, the slave and the son of a slave is the one who has the least to stimulate him in well-doing. We always speak of those who have nothing to lose—I daresay unjustly at times—as the dangerous classes. The denial of the doctrine of assurance implies that the fear bred by ignorance is a more commanding motive to obedience than the love begotten by knowledge. Let us know that we are God's sons, and we shall be on the alert, lest we dishonour our name and forfeit the rare privilege and promise identified with the name.

Does not the truthfulness of the divine nature compel the announcement of this restored relation just so soon as it has become once more a genuine, existing fact? Some things are kept back from us; but for two reasons, neither of which

is applicable in the case before us. There are mysteries which it would be unprofitable for us to know forthwith, and the disclosure of which would only minister to an idle curiosity. And there are mysteries which we are incapable of comprehending in our present stage of religious knowledge and education, and they are put beyond our horizon, not by harsh and arbitrary decrees, but by the necessary narrowness of that horizon. To conceal or misrepresent an actual relationship is little less than a deception, entirely at variance with the character of God. He surely cannot lay Himself open to the suspicion of such weakness and prevarication as sullied for the moment the splendid character of Abraham when he disguised from Abimelech and Pharaoh the near relationship in which Sarah stood to himself. The Spirit cannot possibly allow false conceptions to dominate a mind accessible to His own teaching; and to be dumb when there is a forgiving Father to bring into direct communion with the spirit of a happy child would be to leave that child to self-reproach and misgiving. It is inconsistent with our poor, paltry standards of honour and righteousness to state one side of a question only, and how much more would it be unworthy of the great and holy God! The Spirit is terribly candid in discovering and pressing home our sin and the penalty due to it. He keeps nothing back. He puts the past like an awful weight upon the writhing conscience. Is He an accuser only? When the night passes away, and the day of salvation breaks, will He have no inward message of peace? Surely it is not in one direction only that the Spirit of truth illustrates His own specific quality. The man who speaks with unvarying monotony of his neighbour's faults, and is silent about their redeeming virtues, is crabbed, malignant, diabolic. It is enough if the devil hurl at God's

children the sin of the past, without finding an abettor in this messenger of the Eternal. The Spirit of pity and tenderness will surely certify when that sin has been cancelled, and the wayward child received back to his lost place in the divine favour. Would it not be to dishonour Christ, whom He is sent to glorify, were He to withhold this testimony? He can scarcely glorify the Son and His atoning work, unless He unveil these experimental manifestations of His moral efficacy. If He were not to fulfil this vocation in a single reconciled soul, He would be not only untrue to us but untrue to His Fellow in the Godhead, for whose honour we are restored to our lost place in the divine family.

If God speak to us at all, *He will speak to us on this crucial question which lies nearest to His heart.* It is monstrous we should believe that God deigns to vouchsafe revelations to men and yet withholds any clear intimation of the exact standing towards Himself in which we are found. I can understand the man who asserts that God has never made Himself known to the wisest of His creatures, but not the man who asserts that God has now and again vouchsafed disclosures of His character and person, and yet kept back the assurance of His saving grace and mercy. The first sounds which a child learns to utter are those which stand for "father" and "mother," and in all the tongues of the earth those sacred names are represented by practically the same simple monosyllables. Those names are first taught, and become the keynote of all human speech, because they represent the foremost truth parents wish their little ones to grasp. You may say that an infant's lips first shape those sounds which are scarcely distinguishable from the cries of dumb animals, because they are the easiest for it to articulate, and not

because there is a deliberate intention of putting the fact of parenthood before all other facts. The reason is mechanical rather than sentimental. But even admitting that explanation, we reach the same conclusion by a different pathway. Why were these simplest of all sounds chosen in the beginning to stand for father and mother, but because primitive fathers and mothers, who shaped language and determined its specific uses, wished their offspring first of all to apprehend and express the sacred bond existing between parent and child. The royal father expects to hear the language of love first, and the proprieties of courts, the axioms of statecraft, the sentiments of patriotism, afterwards. The instincts of the parent precede and transcend the prerogatives of the monarch. No one wishes to veil his love from those towards whom it is setting. It was to hide the embarrassment of overwhelming emotion rather than to disguise his actual love that Joseph made himself strange to his brethren. Love seeks relations, and when the Spirit of God comes to us, His first task after making us contrite is to teach us this responsive "Abba." Filial piety towards God, as well as all other parts of theoretical religion, may be taught by the precept of man, and may be a mere formality. It is the Spirit who must make it a living and authoritative experience in our hearts, and if we are indeed sons, brought into such a meek and believing temper of mind that we can receive all the benefits of redemption, God will send the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and it would be gratuitous torture to keep it back.

The possession of this Spirit of adoption is *a necessity to our ethical well-being*, and God's care for the moral side of our life must surely compel His bestowment of it. Nobody but a saint and a hero of unique magnanimity could love

God for the sake of His miscellaneous philanthropy without a personal assurance of His favour and forgiveness. The judge who sentences an offender to flogging or imprisonment with hard labour, may be of the most humane disposition, a helper of every public charity, a model husband and father within his own home circle. But that will not soften the resentment an offender feels in anticipation of his inevitable sentence. There is feud between us and God, a necessary antagonism of the carnal mind to God and His judgments, however exact and equitable. If God leave me any room to think that I am still under His condemnation, an enemy, an alien, and a tacitly sentenced culprit, although the unhappy relation may arise entirely through my own fault, I shall still find myself powerless to love him who is the instrument of my condemnation. And my sonship through the cross may become an aborted relation just as truly as my sonship through the creation, and I may be deprived at last of its supreme benefits. I cannot be a son of God, cherishing the dispositions that conform me to His image, apart from a clearly attested act of adoption, and in the absence of that act I cannot rightly do the least precept God enjoins. If all the highest forms of virtue take their rise in the love of God, the personal assurance of that love must be vital to a man's moral and spiritual health. The very fact that God wants to make men righteous should be sufficiently convincing evidence that to every open and susceptible heart He will authoritatively intimate that adoption which is the starting-point of all worthy obedience. Doubt about God's forgiving love must inevitably blight and wither, canker and destroy the character.

Suppose for a moment that a man is suffering from nervous prostration verging on madness, through the hold

one particular set of ideas has acquired over him, and he is given into the care of a companion who is instructed to keep his attention away from all perilous and exciting topics, and to direct it to those ideas and associations which will be likely to quiet the brain, restore the nervous system, and bring back cheerfulness, health, and intellectual balance. But this strange companion, either through folly or through malice, introduces gruesome topics of conversation, and leaves newspapers with savage tragedies described in large type and melancholy books within reach, and neglects to put about this unhealthy, nervous life an atmosphere that will heal, invigorate, and restore. Such a companion you may justly say will have a hand in the ruin of this noble mind, and all the disasters that may be begotten by its madness.

The atmosphere of love must be put round about men, and their thoughts turned to the forgiving compassions of God in making us His children, if we are to be saved from the madness of sinful passion. God would shut us up in anarchy and hopeless rebellion, would tempt us to recklessness and moral suicide, if He were to hold back that personal assurance of salvation out of which all loving thoughts and emotions and all active obediences spring. God can surely have no care for our spiritual health and restoration if He leaves us under conditions which appeal to what is morbid in our natures.

A God of gentleness and reason, who has to deal with His children by methods of sharp discipline and chastisement, must surely feel Himself compelled to convey this immediate assurance of adoption as *an offset to the stern processes of His providence.* In His inscrutable wisdom, God sometimes seems to deal harshly with those who are presumed to have

an honourable place in His household. He disappoints long-cherished projects, wounds their affections, strains their endurance to the utmost, fills their cup with the bitterest daily potions. If there is no secret inward intimation of the divine Fatherhood to nerve them to endure and to make them patient, they must surely rebel and harden into defiant atheism. Let them be denied this mystic compensation, and they will have no resources with which to meet the strain upon their faith, love, and resignation, and must cast away their confidence. A man upon whom comes the heaviest of life's accumulated sorrows, and who lacks this inward secret, is like a vessel of frail Venetian glass, which has been turned into a vacuum and shivers into fragments under the overwhelming pressure of the atmosphere. How can the human soul bear up against the crushing troubles that sooner or later will come to it, unless there be this supporting breath in its secret faculties, assuring of sonship and empowering to withstand the pressure of fierce providential discipline? Discipline presupposes this compensating privilege, and must prove a death-blow to the soul's well-being without it. The Father's sternest chastenings are counterbalanced by this mystic intimation conveyed by the Spirit of Jesus, who cries within us, "Abba, Father."

Mencius, the Chinese sage, who is honoured second only to Confucius himself, says: "The ancients exchanged children with each other, for the purpose of training them in letters and deportment. They were afraid lest the punishments necessary in the course of education should injure the sacred bond of affection between parent and child." No very great harm was assumed to be done if the lad looked upon the neighbour who taught him his hornbook as a

natural enemy. We smile and think the danger hypothetical, and the Chinese care for the filial sentiment overfastidious. But if no word of love ever crossed a father's lips, and parents tried to make themselves into sphinxes of imperturbable reserve, the danger might be very real indeed. And we cannot love God if He is only an instigator of providential pain and scourging in our lives. We must have the compensating kiss of a felt forgiveness upon our cheek and the tender whisper of assurance in our souls.

The mystery of "the man with the iron mask," who was shut up for the greater portion of his life in the Bastille, and who died and received a nameless burial, has stirred the interest and curiosity of historians. Who was he? is a question that has been asked by everybody who has read the story, and no positive answer has been given. It has been conjectured that he was a natural brother to one of the last of the kings of France, and that the mask was fixed upon his face to hide the royal features it bore. He might have proved a formidable rival to the throne; and to appease the jealousy of the reigning monarch, and keep temptation out of the way of those who would have rallied to his side, the secret was kept to the end and buried in his grave.

God is not a jealous rival or a cruel tyrant that He should shut us up in darkness and put the grim mask upon our faces to hide our noble birth. It is His will that the glory of our sonship should be seen and confessed. If we are prisoners, passing our days in darkness, and uncertain whether our right place is in the dungeon or the court, it is because we have put ourselves into the hands of Giant Despair, who has locked us up in Doubting Castle and hidden for the time the glory of our high estate. Let us trust in our great Deliverer and be of good cheer, and follow in

His footsteps as He leads us out of bondage into blessedness. He comes to break our fetters, and to remove the mask of torture and concealment, and to restore and reveal our sonship. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

Is the enjoyment of this privilege as common as it might be? Is the experience of this grace as vivid and widespread amongst those who bear the Christian name, as amongst their predecessors a generation ago? It is to be feared not. Whilst a belief in its possibility is rarely denied amongst evangelical Christians, a temper of carelessness has arisen which has led to its practical depreciation.

Many causes have contributed to this insidious backsliding. The growing worldliness in the Church has forced the divine Spirit into less intimate and consolatory ministries to many of its members. Repentance is not so deep and passionate, nor the outbreak into light so victorious, as in golden days of revival to which some of our memories may travel. The spread of a "larger-hope" theology, moreover, has tempted many professing Christians to minimise the degree of importance attaching to the possession of this grace. The City of Destruction has changed its name for one less ominous, and the impenitent citizens of the Jordan plain are treated as though they were naturalised subjects of the City of Peace, and were free to ascend into the hill of the Lord. Be it in this life or the next, all will one day come to salvation, so our new prophets assert; and we are tempted to trust in our happy relation to the race as a whole, sure as it is to reach this blessed and tearless goal, and we no longer need a special assurance of adoption into God's family. That is quite logical; for if mankind in its unbroken integrity is one day to pass through the gates into the city

of light, the definite individual witness of salvation is a superfluity.

If the Government were to adopt some scheme of national insurance, and take over the responsibilities of all existing societies, a man would no longer cling to the policy he had taken out years before. If the whole nation were insured, he would not need a special provision of that sort to guard him against starvation, and would probably put his policy into the waste-paper basket. He would feel himself guaranteed against privation in sickness and famine in old age by the benign arrangements which took in the rest of his fellow-citizens. And if a man is to be saved at last through his relation to the whole of humanity, he scarcely needs an inward testimony of present salvation through Jesus Christ from the guilt and power and punishment of sin. Such a testimony may be very good in its way, but he can venture to treat it as a superfluity without running the risk of complete and irretrievable disaster.

It is to be feared that thousands of Christians are letting slip the roll they once grasped as though it were their very life, in the pleasant slumbers to which a roseate universalism has tempted them. The old parables of divine wrath are treated as though they were bits of uncanny folk-lore, with which men of the modern spirit scarcely need to reckon. The angel of destruction is as much a myth as the winged bulls buried in Assyrian palaces. He is gone for ever with the ages of theological harshness and superstition, and is no longer a contemporary agent to be confronted. If that be so, it is quite needless to have the seal and sign of salvation sprinkled upon our lintels and doorposts.

This new theology is open to many indictments. It has had as large a share in producing the religious indifference

of our times as agnosticism itself. But perhaps no impeachment of it is more damning than this: on every side it has tempted men to depreciate the inestimable privilege of assurance. If our sonship in Adam, let us never forget, may become so entirely a dead letter that the relationship must be founded afresh in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, the second gift of sonship may become inoperative likewise. Sonship may shrivel into an aborted power, with nothing attaching to it but a name synonymous with condemnation. We can have no pledge of our place in the divine family here or hereafter apart from this distinct and unmistakable gift.

Let us wake up from these insinuating day-dreams, and reckon with the eternal facts which face us. Let us cling to this birthright of assurance with the same tenacity as our forefathers, and so subject ourselves to the Spirit that His witness shall become a vivid and ever-present experience once more. We are not truly joint-heirs with that Son in whom the Father was always well pleased, if we live without the consciousness of the Father's smile upon our heads and the witness of the loving Spirit in our souls, for that was the sure birthright of our elder Brother.

VIII

The New Logic of the Pentecost

THE NEW LOGIC OF THE PENTECOST

Prove all things.—1 Thess. v. 20.

In demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.—1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

It is sometimes said that the religion of the vast majority of Christians is unthinking, illogical, second-hand, and that of all classes of people they are the most indifferent to the common rules of evidence. If that is so, the blame does not rest with Christ and His first disciples. Test your teachers, said the Prophet of Nazareth in His great Galilæan manifesto, and by doing that you will be able to test the contents of the message they deliver. Take no man's doctrine upon trust because of his mere office. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" If you accept a doctrine, let it be because of the character of its advocate and because the doctrine is calculated to produce the right kind of character everywhere. And that test He wished to be strictly and unflinchingly applied to Himself and His own manner of life and teaching. Such a test may happily be used by those who are in the crudest stages of moral growth and development, for the very infant can judge character, and judge it shrewdly at times, and in every man there is enough conscience left to discriminate between right and wrong, even when there is a pitiable lack of motive-force to act out the

knowledge. "Try the spirits," said the last surviving apostle, "for many false prophets have gone out into the world." The touchstone of truth is within every spiritual man, and the natural man, if even he has no inherent fitness as yet to test spiritual truth itself, can test the teacher. Christianity does not beg for credulity at first and promise demonstration afterwards, for coincident with the proclamation of its message there is an inner demonstration of soul-renewing and God-unveiling power. When the world asserts that the Christian's faith is illogical, it means that in its judgment the facts of Christian life and experience should be submitted to tests which lack relevancy and have been devised for an entirely different class of subjects. A disciple may happen to be ignorant of some of the mere accidents of his faith without grave spiritual loss. He may now and again be unable so to formulate articulately the grounds of his faith as to make it seem plausible to the world. But all the same he has within himself spiritual demonstrations that are sufficiently clear, sane, strong, convincing. If he has a vital experience of the saving power of God, he is the prince of logicians.

It is obvious at a glance that the range of subjects in reference to which we can fulfil the command of the apostle is exceedingly limited. If we were to try and carry out this precept in many matters which concern us deeply, life itself would be quite impossible. In not a few of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we have to be guided by the word and authority of others. The lad would not get far in either physical or intellectual growth who tried to put this maxim into practice, and prove that his food was unadulterated, his raiment of the material for which it was sold, his instructors properly certificated, and all the

statements in his satchel of school-books verifiable by the severest canons of evidence. Such a programme would soon land him in the imbecile ward of the poorhouse, rather than on the heights of Olympian wisdom. Processes of proof and experiment will come in at a later stage, and occupy a place of ever-growing importance in his life. But when even his reason has reached its lustiest strength and its largest maturity, the precept will scarcely admit of universal application.

The historian, the biologist, the student of sociology who aspires to rigid, unimpeachable certainty, cannot well ignore the labours of his predecessors and contemporaries, and disclaim everything which lies outside his own particular groove. The historian reverts only to original records when he has to present disputed facts. The scientist would find it impossible to repeat all the experiments which have led up to the positions from which he starts on new lines of investigation. The student of comparative ethnology or language, in constructing his great classifications, trusts to the good faith and sobriety of those who have brought together the facts necessary to his synthesis. And the explorer must guide himself by existing maps, and cannot take part in some new trigonometrical survey before plunging into the desert. Life would be too short for such a mania. We must accept the division of labour, and in not a few subjects trust the duly accredited worker who precedes us, or our individual task will remain untouched.

And the application of this precept, "prove all things," to religious subjects is limited. Questions which are scarcely open to the investigation of the many may sometimes be debated by doctors of the Church; for the many lack time, tools, and training. For instance, some of the questions about the books of the Bible in which we are all concerned to-day, questions

of date, authorship, original documents used, traces of after-editing, having no relevance to the disciples at Thessalonica, could not conceivably come within the scope of the apostle's thought. This letter from St. Paul was the first fragment of the New Testament canon upon which they had looked, and it is not at all likely that many of them knew much of the Old Testament canon. The materials through the use of which some questions of Bible criticism must be settled may be as much beyond our reach as of this early Gentile Church. The special theory of inspiration, it is well for us to hold, scarcely admits of a strictly individual settlement. In what proportion are divine and human elements combined in this portfolio of ancient literature called the Bible? Does God's breath diffuse itself equally through every word of the Bible? or does it concentrate its virtues in certain central truths, just as the sap of the flower distils itself into a finer essence to replenish the specialised honey glands? The questions are so delicate that they scarcely admit of a rough and ready answer. Is the historical continuity of ordinations from the time of the apostles necessary to the grace of the sacraments? and if so, has that historical continuity been so faultlessly maintained that the proof would satisfy the rules of evidence in an English law court? The individual investigation which would be required to answer the latter part of this question is quite impossible for nine-tenths of our fellow-believers, and we may therefore conclude that such questions are not essential to our individual salvation. For many of us a competent, well-informed, independent reply is quite impossible. The diver who is about to descend many fathoms below the surface of the sea, the guide who proposes to let himself down sheer precipices of ice, the steeple-jack who is going to

climb a tall mill-chimney, will test for himself tackle and rope and pulley. Where so much is at stake, it would be foolhardy to enter upon the task without doing so. Whatever may be essential to salvation comes within the scope of individual proof and experiment, and such proof and experiment are binding duties. The context defines the scope of this precept: "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings." Here then, in the realm of the Spirit's living activities upon ourselves and others must our methods of verification find their proper scope and sphere.

In making it a personal duty to prove all essential truth, Paul implies that *the materials for that proof are within easy range.* Or, in other words, the Spirit of truth is accessible to all who will treat with Him on His own terms.

To complete the chain of evidence he is bringing together, the naturalist may sometimes need to visit the forests of New Guinea or Madagascar, and that may be quite impracticable for him. To test some of his theories about the sun, the astronomer may have to wait till the next total eclipse takes place, and he may be dead by that time. The writer upon Chinese literature may need to refer to some rare classic in the Imperial Library at Pekin, and even if he could make the journey, it would be impossible for him to gain admission there. An American inventor who was making experiments to find out the best material for the carbon points of the electric light had to stop in his work for months till he could get a consignment of Japanese bamboos, the outer fibre of which was expected to yield special results. It is useless to ask a cripple to ascend Chimborazo to make a set of observations that may be necessary in the study of the light or the atmosphere. The tramp who has not enough

money to pay his railway fare to the next town cannot undertake a journey to Thibet to test the statement of Abbé Huc, that the country is as rich in gold as it is poor in crops and pasturage. But the man most crippled by disability can register the average temperature on his own cottage wall, or put down the date on which the first swallow is seen, or note the order in which the trees unpack their foliage in the springtime; for all such facts come within the compass of his daily life and observation. And all the questions the apostle expects us to prove for ourselves lie within the sphere of our personal life and the swing of the mystic forces which throb there. We do not need to master half a dozen sciences, acquire facility in deciphering ancient manuscripts, or ransack the convents and public libraries of a continent, to put into practice the rules of evidence St. Paul commends to us. If we abstain from doing one thing, "quenching the Spirit," we shall put ourselves in a fair way for proving all things belonging to the spiritual life. The very obligation implies the Spirit's constant presence and activity for spiritual ends. If I assert some fact about the equipment of a Roman soldier, and request you to prove it by a visit to that ford of the Thames across which Cæsar led his legions, I send you on a fool's quest; for the Roman soldier has not been there for centuries, and is not likely to reappear. We may see the power of God as surely as we see the sky at noonday or stars at nightfall, if we only put ourselves under the right conditions. When Paul says, "Prove all things," he means have spiritual life and all that it includes. Be your own evidence, and get an irrefutable experience.

How does the gospel demonstrate itself and vindicate its claim to be the power of God amongst men? By the strik-

ing transformations of character it brings to pass. "And such were some of you," says Paul to the Corinthians, after an all but exhaustive enumeration of the saddest forms of human depravity: "but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." Power asserting itself in such unexampled moral revolutions is itself a theology, for the power that influences character takes its rise in personality. Things never remake and reorganise character except so far as they are the signs and symbols of the personalities which work through them. In strict reality, men can neither be made better nor worse by any change in their external conditions. Things may constitute the temptations through which men fall, or the incitements through which they rise in the scale of character; but all deterioration or improvement of soul comes through the forces of one moral nature transfusing itself into another, or, in other words, through the operation of one personality upon another. And thus you see how the power which washed from their contaminations those who were once fornicators, thieves, covetous, drunkards, idolaters, demonstrates much underlying truth concerning God and His economies. Corruption might still be cleaving to some members of the Church of Corinth, and if we had lived in those days, it may be we should have spent more time in ill-natured gossip about the incestuous person than in magnifying the power of divine grace in the rest. At the very lowest estimate, this Church on the isthmus was one of God's splendid miracles, and the blemish cleaving to it in some of its parts was as nothing to the appalling pollution that had been washed away. Indeed, this survival of a repulsive social obliquity in the Church, like some excrescence or

useless appendage in the land animal whose remote ancestors were amphibious, shows the enormous march of change through which the Church had passed in a comparatively little fraction of a lifetime.

The power of a triple personality had been acting here: that of a holy Father pitying those who had lost His image; that of a Son who at the will of the Father had given Himself for men, and in honour of whose cross these degraded natures had been pardoned, purified, uplifted from the mire; that of a Spirit who had made men realise through the preaching of the cross these divine energies of emancipation. Power is the test of religious truth—the peculiar quality of power, that is, which moulds and invigorates character. There are beliefs which awaken fanaticism and stir men's blood to fever-heat; but on close examination it is found that character in its essential constituents is not modified for the better by these beliefs. The ineffectuality of some modernised presentations of Christian doctrine, which empty them of their vital significance, is their sufficient condemnation. There must be more truth than error in the statement which the Holy Ghost adopts in His unique work of revolutionising character and making it new to its deepest roots. The sudden and complete transformation of savage tribes and nations by the preaching of the missionary is a golden chapter in the book of Christian evidence, and by working back from the result achieved to the message proclaimed, it is possible to judge of the divine authority of the different elements in the evangel. These notable Corinthian conversions each contained within itself a miniature creed, resting not on the sagacious decisions of the first three councils, but on the power of God,—a creed which recognised an eternal Fatherhood, the fountain of all new life and virtue, a Son who gave

Himself for man's rescue, and a Spirit who made the preaching of the cross the power of God unto salvation. Here there was a practical if not a metaphysical Trinity, and no council could add a grain to the wisdom and certainty of the faith which welled up out of saving experience.

It has been said that *every science must be left free to determine its own methods of proof.* The tests which avail in one branch of knowledge may be quite barren if applied to another. Whilst common truths underlie all branches of science, those truths assume different forms and must be variously verified under divergent conditions. The greater part of the world's unbelief, so far at least as it is intellectual, arises from the attempt to apply formulæ set up in the study of visible nature to purely spiritual things. God must be free to prescribe the pathway by which men shall advance to the knowledge of His character, government, and purposes; and He has determined that the discussion of religion as a mere theory of the universe and human life shall be barren. He resents the curiosity of the trifler, the hobbyist, the *dilettante* theologian. He will keep the sacred mystery of His own being, and all that it implies and involves, out of the category of crazes, scientific diversions, themes for a brief hour's chattering dialectic on Mars Hill. Knowledge can only come to the serious-minded, and come by doing. In this way He makes the truth-seeking instinct in the human breast an enlisted ally of man's personal salvation. That convincing demonstration we desire can only dawn with the renewal of the soul to a holier and a better life. To a faith that stands in the wisdom of men God will never affix His confirming seal. Faith is too high and unchanging a thing to be linked with this fickle and changing element. If we want certainty in divine things,

we must come into close association with that Spirit who holds the clews of all knowledge in His mysterious hands, and we cannot do that without submitting to the sanctification of His impressive presence. We must be made to feel our indebtedness to the Lord and Giver of life. Knowledge and holiness are indissolubly joined, and "Prove all things" means Come into a realm where sin will shed itself off from your nature, and you will be informed and transfigured with the purifying light of God. Yield yourself implicitly to the will of that Spirit who comes to demonstrate in the human conscience and life the living principles of the gospel.

Have you really taken the trouble to judge Christianity by its own tests? Perhaps you are ready enough with your challenge to its advocates. Let the preacher prove it to me, for I am quite open to conviction. But that is what neither man on earth nor angel in heaven can do, for it is self-proved. You cannot expect the demonstration of Christian verities to take place within you if you live, move, and breathe in unspiritual realms, and habituate yourself to a social environment the only effect of which can be to blunt and impair all your finer faculties and discernments. You might as well expect to advance scholarship by destroying books, and to push astronomical discovery by wrecking observatories, and to test colours by blocking up windows and wooing the darkness that can be felt. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Have you mastered the alphabet of your education by asking in submissive penitence, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Have you entered your name as a follower, and received your initia-

tion, by renouncing self, pushing away proffered pomps and crowns, facing the great cross and obeying the holy whisper within you? The student of science expects, when he begins to do original work, that his experiments will cost him something. Chemicals, instruments, and all the appointments of the laboratory will involve an outlay that will tax his resources. Is it a cheap verification of Christianity you are expecting, a verification without a solitary sacrifice? If you can prove these magnificent assumptions, it is surely worth while to accept Christ's terms for the sake of doing it.

It is said that the air of the famous Kentucky cave has a peculiar power of stimulating the senses. After the visitor has been in its strange and silent labyrinths for an hour or two, and comes back into the open air, he can discern the very scents of the flowers and trees and grasses. New perceptions of spiritual things will come to you if you get away from the glaring stage-lights and blandishments and theatricalities of this meretricious world, from the vulgar palpitating excitements of buying and selling and making gain, from the coarse surfeiting and stupefying luxury and wantonness of "society" so called, and in the quiet of God's presence suffer yourself to be absorbed by His word and stimulated by the influences of that inner sanctuary open to elect souls. When you come forth again, a higher universe will have superimposed itself upon the old.

A French mystic of unquestionable saintliness and sincerity once declared that he was conscious of the distinct and separate indwelling of each Person in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To some of us this sounds like the extravagance of a devout imagination, the rash inference of a man not sufficiently clear-headed to draw the line between

the human and divine elements in his own religious experience. But many things seem extravagant because they are untested. We have scarcely touched the fringe of that vast area of spiritual knowledge which is free to every man who will approach it by strictly spiritual pathways. One cannot read through the Bible without feeling how much there is in its assurances which is unproved and which God would fain have us prove with all possible speed. It points to an unexplored continent of knowledge, on which we have scarcely done more than get a precarious foothold, to a new world, yea, rather to a galaxy of worlds, the faint tremors of whose influence we are only just beginning to feel. Many things which baffle the brain will demonstrate themselves in actual performance. Our great need is not a new revelation (men sometimes clamour for that), but stimulated and spiritualised senses to discern those awaiting revelations which are only hidden from us by the dimness and stupor bred of our half-animalised habits and traditions.

It is perhaps a matter of congratulation that we live in days when no man's faith is allowed to pass unchallenged. The strenuous conflict which is already raging will bring low the weak and the unspiritual, all those whose faith is a fashion, a convenient password, a species of mimetic piety. Some of us perhaps have a creed which is an accident, a convention, a trick learned from the schoolmaster, a flickering reminiscence of early catechism, a propriety of reputable orthodoxy. It is perhaps well that the faith which rests upon mere tradition should perish in the ordeal of fire which is kindling itself, if we are driven to get a purer and less perishable faith from the Spirit of God Himself. The age of true faith can never come till we subject ourselves more

completely to the will of the Spirit, and accord a more just recognition of His work within us. "Now we believe not because of thy testimony," it will be ours to say, as we turn from our ecclesiastical systems and the testimonies that served a right and proper purpose in the days of our mere tutelage; "but we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

IX

The Inspirer of Prayer

THE INSPIRER OF PRAYER

Praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.—Eph. vi. 18.

Praying in the Holy Ghost.—Jude 20.

Jude, a brother of our Lord, speaks of the prayer which transcends the normal religious capacity of human nature as one of the conditions through the observance of which the believer must keep himself in the love of God and in the steadfast expectancy of consummated redemption. Without prayer, and prayer too pervaded by the peculiar inspirations of the Pentecost, we are not at all likely to keep ourselves in that love. The attachment of friend to friend is apt to be weakened, if not destroyed, where communication ceases. When some member of a family is away in a foreign land, the only antidote to the chilling effect of distance is correspondence, and correspondence which is free, vivacious, unconstrained. If the correspondence become stilted and formal only, it is about as hurtful to affection as complete silence. Routine, automatism, periodical acts of remembrance dictated by respect for what is proper, are as grieving to close cleaving and sensitive natures as sundering seas. The heart must send its pulsations through every available channel of intercourse if love is to be kept alive. And that is true in the sphere of the religious life. No man can keep himself in the love of

God without using all the lines of communication God has opened to him, and the prayer with which we keep ourselves in correspondence with God must be permeated by supernatural help and vitality. Prayer will drag and become distasteful, it will fret like an accursed burden, and at last make a great breach between ourselves and God, if it is informed only with those forces which are bred in unaided nature.

Just as the burning incense encircled with its exhilarating clouds the form of the high priest, as he went into the inner sanctuary, so must we be enswathed in that peculiar atmosphere of sensibility created by the Holy Spirit of God as we draw nigh to the mercy-seat. Our thoughts must be refined and exalted, our best desires stimulated, our moral affections stirred to holier pulsations, we must needs be carried beyond ourselves, as we venture to stand in the presence of the Most High. The new life within us must be steeped in the influences of a perennial Pentecost, and prayer must become a loftier force than is possible when it is fed only through the channels of the old Adam, if we are to reach that ideal of prayer set up both by the Apostle Paul and by James, the brother of Him who was the pattern of all high and perfect prayer.

The Spirit of God helps prayer long before this ideal of praying in the Holy Ghost is completely realised in the daily experience. In the imperfect prayer which He does not as yet pervade with this supreme ascendency, He is present, in some degree at least. The first faint desire, the soul-tumult out of which arises the cry to God for help and mercy, the devout sigh of solicitation in the man who is far from spiritual, are tokens of a prevenient quickening. The prayer of the penitent derives its efficacy

from the influence of His veiled presence. But the supplications of the man who is a seeker after God rather than a sealed son, He stimulates here and there only and with more or less of intermittency—an intermittency which arises not because of any variableness in His gracious purposes, but from the unstable moods of an irresolute and unregenerate mind. This perfect ideal of prayer is only attained by the nature which is ripe in spirituality, steadfast in its Godward attitude, immersed in the blessed influences distilled from this sacred presence. The man who prays before he is the subject of a new life is unconscious of the divine presence which stirs up his prayers and prompts his faint desires after better things. When a believer has learned to pray in the Holy Ghost, he is awake to the nearness and active operation of a mystic Being who incites and energises his prayers and makes them inherently well-pleasing to God.

In him who prays according to this evangelical standard, *the Spirit stimulates the sense of need.* When we discuss the subject of prayer and try to diagnose the present-day neglect of the privilege, it is well to go to the root of things. Many are comparatively prayerless in their habits, because there is no sharp sense of need at the core of the life. The age itself is so interesting, and fortune pampers men with so many worldly benefits and luxuries, that they have scarcely any aspirations which need to be fulfilled in supernatural spheres. Their souls have not been harrowed with grief or made to ache with want; and if they pray at all, it is in imitation of prevailing customs only, or as a tribute to the semi-sacred memories of childhood. A candid nature in which is no keen spiritual desire disdains an unintelligent automatism in religion, and will

not pretend to pray when no strong, stimulating motives are at work in the heart and conscience. Where men pray without personal convictions and in imitation of current usage, desires will press to the forefront of their prayers which ought not to be there, or there in very subordinate positions only. "Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." When their frivolous and shallow wishes seem to be gratified, such men cease to pray, and when crossed and baffled, they drift into moods of mingled mortification and scepticism, and either tacitly assume or openly proclaim the uselessness of prayer. Our natural desires can no more mature into true prayer than the bits of coloured gauze in the milliner's shop, representing orange, peach, and cherry blossom, can set into fruit. Till the Spirit comes to us, we are shut up in the senses, and can no more feel the throb of the great currents which course through the spiritual world, than the creatures in the glass cases of an aquarium can feel the enthusiasms which ebb and flow in the veins of a great nation. There can be no right and enduring sense of need unless through the constant inspirations of the Spirit. Where that is lacking, family worship, meetings for prayer, and even the secret chamber, will be neglected, because no sufficient motive-power of desire comes into play to energise these exercises and give them the necessary touch of sincerity and earnestness. Insulate those who have not received the Spirit from the traditions of their training, and the undefined social and family proprieties they think it necessary to keep up, and it is difficult to see how the stock of spontaneous personal need left behind can bring them to their knees and keep them there for an hour in a lifetime.

But the unspiritual are not only shut up in the senses and the things of the senses, they have no keen realisation of the deepest needs of the world. They assume that a broad law of betterment is at work in human history, and if there is any exception to the law, every man is to blame for the drawbacks which stint and embitter his own life. The bitter cry of the outcast multitude finds no echo in their hearts. Woeful shadows rest upon half the homes in the city, in the breasts of many passed in the streets there are rankling wounds worse than knife-stabs, and throngs of souls sink down daily into darkness and doom; and yet these facts never come into their prayers and raise them into intense, irrepressible fervour. The social superstructure, with all that it imports, is looked upon as though it were a mere flint-mill. Their various acts of devotion are cold-blooded pieties, lacking all pitifulness and urgency. Human nature without the Holy Spirit of God is too narrow and self-occupied to find a place for the spiritual wants and woes of others in its supplications. Prayer languishes everywhere through this lack of desire, not only for ourselves, but for others likewise. It is often like the lame man at the gate of the temple. It cannot pass into the sanctuary where God is, and lounges in evidence at the portal only for some purpose entirely different from that contemplated in the holy services. It is weak, helpless, stranded, paralysed. Like the ship described by the "Ancient Mariner," it is becalmed in a sea of breathless stagnation, slime, and death. Prayer cannot move without desire.

Things will be far otherwise when the Spirit comes to us, and not only prompts our prayers, but so encircles us with His presence and power, that the world, its maxims, chilling influences, and sordid traditions of conduct, can scarcely get

near us or affect us in any way. If we live in the atmosphere created by the inspirations of the Spirit, self-knowledge will grow, and a more adequate interpretation of our own needs will arise within us, and our affections will be so fed from the fountains of the divine unselfishness that we shall be acutely sensitive to the needs of the world, and shall pray agreeably to the counsels of Him whose name is Love. If we reach the level of privilege, supplication will be no longer inanimate, perfunctory, circumscribed, the unedifying artifice of a self-centred soul.

He whose soul is permeated by the presence and teaching of the Spirit will be *kept from asking those things which are at variance with the counsels of the Most High.* Strange and sacred restraints are cast about the believer whom He actuates, and no petty, foolish, self-seeking prayers will be likely to pass the lips. Where the influences of the Spirit are wanting, every kind of mistake is possible. Things frivolous and even hurtful are insatiably desired, and the prayers presented bear the stamp of unregeneracy. They express cowardice, luxuriousness, sordid ambition, envying, strife, and cannot bring blessing upon us; for it is vain to expect God to answer them if they voice our passions. In presence of the solemn and gigantic needs that should be the burden of a good man's prayers, these bastard prayers are an affront, an impertinence, and a shame. Now the Spirit will keep the prayers of those who are docile to His leadings, and who woo His gracious and unfailing ministries, from clashing with the holiness of the divine nature, and the large and benign counsels of the divine providence. Perhaps He may not always give to us explicit intimations of the temporal things which we may legitimately ask, for it is His purpose that we should develop a clear personal judgment, and He will

always help and strengthen that. But we may boldly count upon Him restraining us from prayers for things flatly out of harmony with the divine will. Wherever the Spirit is honoured and discerned, He will prompt us to ask for what is supremely important, and will make us submissive to all the will of God. The nature possessed by those right and acceptable desires which are instilled into it by the Spirit will instinctively exclude what is false, foolish, and wrong from its prayers. Indeed, there will be no room for such things to unfold themselves. The Holy Ghost brings its subjects into active and happy sympathy with the divine plans, and makes that sympathy to dominate every temper and act of devotion. From many a mortification and disappointment shall we be saved if we attain this high standard of privilege, for the soul saturated in the all-diffusive influences of the Spirit cannot pray amiss. Mrs. Besant says she gave up praying because it seemed so much like dictating to a Being who was wiser than herself. "I had given up the use of prayer as a blasphemous absurdity, since an all-wise God could not need my suggestions, nor an all-good God require my promptings." Had she been taught a form of Christianity, one wonders, which never reminded her of the possibility of praying in the Holy Ghost? By such prayer we shall keep ourselves in the love of God, for if we never find the heavens as brass, our faith in God's tenderness and fidelity cannot deteriorate. All such prayer will strengthen the tie uniting us to God.

In the prayer offered under those influences which the Holy Ghost creates to compass and enswathe us in our access to God, there will be *an unwavering sense of the efficacy of Christ's work.* It is His special mission to glorify Christ, and He never forgets the absorbing end for which He was

sent. He can perhaps fulfil this mission more impressively through those prayers of the saints which He helps and animates than by those accompaniments of conscience-arresting power vouchsafed in connexion with the preaching of the gospel to the world. Just as great winds once carried to rocky islands and barren peninsulas the seeds out of which arose at last tossing forests of beauty and far-ranging zones of sweetness and fragrance, so the great Spirit brings into the poor, barren prayers of those who are touched by His breath a seed of new things, and diffuses there the beauty and fragrance of Christ's efficacious redemptive act. He makes Christ more than a devoutly uttered name. The virtues of that work whose marvellous and immortal memories are cherished in both heaven and earth are brought out by His subtle movements within us. He who searches the deep things of God was the solitary witness of the effect upon the mind of the Father wrought by the great sacrifice of love. He was the confidant of unique mysteries. The terror of the wrath that was assuaged and turned aside by the unblemished offering of the cross, what we owe to the cross already, and shall yet owe in coming days, He alone can tell. Who but He can gauge the force of that argument for help at the successive stages of our salvation and purifying discipline arising out of the bloody passion? He fathomed, as no created being could, the influence of the obedient death on the thought and the counsel of the Father. He discerned the power human prayer was destined to attain when resting for its acceptance upon the great sin-offering alone. Christ by taking away sin took away the incompetence of human prayer, and the Spirit makes us steadfastly conscious of the fact. No being purified by trust in that sacrifice can pray out of proportion to the rights it has secured. We are

brought into participation with a priesthood that cannot be denied. Our prayers are so often futile, or outstep the bounds of God's counsels, because we have such a vague and inadequate sense of the efficacy of Christ's work; but if they are pervaded by that Spirit whose office it is to reveal Christ, we shall know how the Father is both moved and covenanted to help us, and such faith cannot but prevail. This secret, undefinable persuasion of the unknown power inherent in Christ's sacrifice and mediation is a mark of those who pray in the Holy Ghost.

The prayer upwinging itself through that special atmosphere with which the Holy Ghost enwraps the obedient soul is characterised by *a sense of filial confidence.* The grace of assurance it is His joy to bring makes the widest possible difference in the tone and quality of the devotional life. The Spirit brings men into that radiant cloud where the Son and the Father spake mysteries with each other that even the chosen three could not catch. It is just as much the work of the Spirit to signify our glad acceptance by the Father as it is of the sun to rain light and warmth upon every realm over which it hovers. The Spirit cannot come from the God of love to a contrite soul without bringing tokens, pledges, intimations of God's forgiving love. He gives us access into an unshadowed grace in which we may stand to the very end; and if we retain this unfailing witness, we shall always be on speaking terms with God. Never let us think of it as a superfluous luxury of the religious life rather than an essential privilege. It is given to open for us constant and intimate access to God, and is vital to the prevalency of our prayers. It is a mystery that some men should pray at all, conscious as they are, not only of a startling moral interval between them-

selves and God, but of active alienation likewise. The efficacy of their efforts might seem to be almost as hopeless as throwing a bottled message into the sea in the hope that the bottle will be washed up on some distant shore and forwarded to its destination. Will the sealed missive be picked up by those who will pay the slightest heed to the scrawl of an alien writer? All the probabilities seem against it. But prayer, where there is the filial confidence inspired by an indwelling Spirit of witness, is like committing a letter to the care of some imperial power which rules the seas, and whose lines of communication have never been interrupted for a single day. The prayer of one who is without the Spirit is like the turning of the captive Jew to a distant and desolated shrine or a rueful mumbling at the wailing place, rather than a privileged interview at the mercy-seat;—an act in which there is more fear, misgiving, and heartbreak than triumph. The Spirit of assurance brings us into conscious accord with God and His administrations, and makes us proprietors in the vast domain over which Jesus reigns. Prayer so strengthened is lowly love speaking into the ear of the infinite and eternal love.

Where the Spirit of assurance is lacking, prayer is a voice in the outer court of the Gentiles, rather than the freedom of speech accorded to Abraham and Moses. It is the husky plaint of the leper who kneels in a vague background, and whose sobs pass in faint gusts over the head of the crowd, who scarcely dares project his breath to the mark on which his eyes are set, lest he should poison the very air, and desecrate the sacred figure he invokes. It is a cry in the realm of God's sovereignty only. But when the Spirit helps prayer, it is a cry in the circle lit up with the benignity of fatherhood. A voice speaking in the frigid spaces of a king-

dom has an accent of persuasion about it very different from that which speaks in the home. When the Holy Spirit is present to impart assurance, prayer becomes an entirely new thing; for assurance is the master key by which we may pass into the king's presence-chamber at any hour of the day and night, to find tender and generous welcome and to learn that we are heard as we whisper our needs and solicitations into the all-pitiful ear. By praying in the Holy Ghost, Paul and Jude meant that and even more, and such prayer will make us prevail against evil, and keep us in the love of God. Prayer, falling short of this standard, is only a little above the level of pious mechanism, and cannot nourish the high affections of the soul towards God. Prayer in the Holy Ghost involves the mystic interchange and fellowship of love.

Where prayer is presented under these supernatural conditions, there will be *a true apprehension of the vast resourcefulness of God.* The Pentecostal atmosphere is full of the Spirit's interpretation of the wisdom, power, generosity, intimate nearness of the Father; and prayer necessarily acquires a distinctive tone from that atmosphere out of which it arises. The fact that the Holy Spirit is more sensitive to our needs than we who are the subjects of them should satisfy us that He has also measured the help laid up for us in the deep counsels of God. As we pray, He shows God to us in all His amazing plenitudes, and makes His strength authoritatively ours.

The man who prays without these inspirations is like one who, wrapped about with the ignorance of the stone age, stands upon the shore and yearns for some distant world of which he has dreamed. The plains there would supply his need of bread, the leaves and fruits of the forest

would heal his maladies, and the metals hidden in the hills would defend his life and give him the material from which to construct a better civilisation. But he is not dwelling in an age charged with the spirit of scientific discovery and achievement. He cannot cross to this promised land and possess its good. His poor craft is unfit to breast the mighty seas, there is no interpreter to explain to him the marvellous products of the soil and their uses, no government to take him in hand and give him a sure tenure of the land. Another looks out towards that earthly elysium through an atmosphere of modern civilisation. The very air he breathes throbs with the genius of the century. He can cross the seas, he can learn the precious uses of the natural products which abound there, he can find refuge in the free institutions which flourish like trees of the Lord's own planting, he can find a hand stretched out to put him in possession of the soil with all that it holds and can be made to grow.

So is it with the man who prays in the Holy Ghost. Not only does the wisdom of God interpret the secrets of redemption to his heart, but the power of God brings him into a new world in which all things are possible. The man who prays under these conditions becomes a giant by the act, and, seeing how God has put His very infinitude at the service of the elect, feels himself bound by ties of ever-growing strength to God. And thus does he keep himself in that love of God which means victory over all seen and unseen foes.

We are all familiar with *the effect of atmosphere upon the quality of work*, and the ease with which it is accomplished. In some parts of the world, malaria and tropical heat speedily turn healthy and capable colonists into sickly

loiterers and rickety "ne'er-do-weels." No race seems able to toil under the frightful conditions of climate which prevail on the Isthmus of Panama. And, on the other hand, some climates are so crisp and exhilarating that the laggard finds it difficult to do less than a fair day's work. Unknown ingredients in the air seem to accelerate the blood and spur to strenuous exertion. The qualities of the work done by poet, painter, musician, may almost be told in the terms of the atmospheric pressure prevailing at the time. Genius, just as much as the unopened flower bud, needs the bright, bracing day to bring out its splendour.

And the soul requires for the reaching out of its highest powers towards God a refined and well-balanced element, which we can only describe as "climate" or "atmosphere." The difference between praying on the mere level of our natural perceptions and sympathies, and praying in a realm pervaded by the unfailing inspirations of the Spirit, is not unlike the difference between drudgery on a tropical swamp and movement on a glorious tableland. In the one case prayer is an effort, a burden, a vexation, and an idle penance; in the other, a joy, a sunrise, a melodious outrush of upper springs, glad spontaneity, life pulsating with the sense of power and victory. The prayer imposed upon us by slavish conventions or habits, the prime motives of which have shrivelled away, seems to open all the channels of the life to poison, disease, religious degeneration. But when the breath of the Spirit pervades the shrine in which we pray, and calls up a gracious environment which we can carry about with us in our daily walk, prayer acquires new attributes, assumes fresh attractions, and springs to unknown victories.

Under this covenant of more perfect help and privilege,

ought not prayer to attain a surpassing prevalency? In our communion with God we should begin just where the Old Testament saints left off. As we have already seen, the operation of the Spirit upon the patriarchs, prophets, and righteous men of the earlier times was subject to undefinable restrictions and reserves. Not only of the less distinguished men of the theocracy, but even of inspired men, it was in some sense true that "the Spirit was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified." For the pre-Christian servants of God there was no supernatural discovery and accentuation of spiritual need, no sense of filial confidence kindled by the message of the Comforter, no assurance that through a sacrifice of boundless spiritual virtue sin had been finally removed, no disclosure of the overflowing resourcefulness of God, and of the share of the saints in all the benefits of that resourcefulness, no atmosphere of Pentecostal magnetism and suggestion in which to pray. When Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Daniel, pleaded with God, there was no enswathement of baptismal fire such as the Messiah brings to His waiting people. And yet how wonderful and far-reaching the efficacy of their prayer! If such achievements were possible to their prayers without any of the New Covenant helps and privileges which are our birthright, what kind of praying is due from us who should be steeped in the sevenfold influences of a continuous Pentecost? Even the first disciples praying in the upper room were not praying in the Holy Ghost till the culminating moment, symbolised by rushing winds and tongues of fire, had struck. What kind of prayer ought to be on your lips and mine, who are not only heirs of the promise, but actual possessors of the mystic reality to which the promise pointed? The very

suggestion of what *ought* to be should humble us into the dust as we think of the unworthy praying of the past, and raise the pulse of our hope as we recognise that in these suggestive phrases Paul and Jude are not depicting some gorgeous cloudland of pious fancy, but what is sober possibility and stringent obligation. Shall we not set ourselves to spend the rest of our life in closer converse with God, and more prevailing supplication for ourselves and for all men?

By praying under these Pentecostal conditions we may come to reach *the apostolic mark of continual and unceasing prayer*. Is not He who prompts and upholds the supplications of those receiving His baptism of fire present at all times, and unsleeping in His subtle ministries as the providence of the great Being whose attributes He shares? If we dwell in a circle of which He is the vitalising centre, our conscious and even unconscious movements of thought and feeling will be informed by strange stimulations. Acclimatised to these sacred conditions, the habit of prayer will be a second and a better nature to us. Many flowers observe a periodic rule in shedding their perfumes upon the air. They seem to know the hours at which the insects whose visits they wish to attract are upon the wing. Some send forth their scents in the early morning only, some at noonday, some at eventide, and some which are fertilised by moths only after the darkness has long set in. But this great Helper of human prayer diffuses His influence about us not only when the church bells ring, or our own appointed hours of communion with God come round, or in seasons of special revival, but day and night throughout all the changes of the world; for it is as a constant guest He has come to us, and not as a friend who looks in

upon us as He is "passing through." The stimulations of this unseen and ever patient Helper never fail, and so it is our privilege to "pray always and not to faint."

The under side of every leaf is furnished with thousands of tiny mouths, through which the leaf breathes back upon the world the air it has purified and sweetened for human uses. And so the foliage of a mighty forest is like a cluster of fountains from which health and quickening alchemies are ever pouring, which supply the needs of all those kingdoms of life gathered under its shadow. And in the same way the Holy Spirit of God breathes upon us from every point of our environment. Through countless mouths His soul-quickening influences flow silently into us, neutralising the doubt, sloth, and sin exhaled from the lower nature, so that we can breathe back our souls to God in faith and desire continuous as the river from God's throne.

This exhortation seems to imply *the constancy of the laws under which the Spirit operates*, and our power of so conforming to those laws as to reach this lofty experience. It ought to be no little encouragement to us that this habit is spoken of as one of the conditions of our perseverance, and it must be therefore just as practicable for us to pray in the Holy Ghost as it is to keep ourselves in the love of God. To have this close communion with the Most High is not a distinction of pre-eminent saintship, but the privilege of all who abide in His love. Indeed, they cannot truly abide in God's love without praying much in this atmosphere of supernatural help and suggestion. In writing to the Ephesians, Paul brings this habit of Spirit-pervaded prayer into the selfsame connexion of ideas as Jude. To "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" is a part of the Christian panoply, and will prove a defence

against the appalling forces of darkness which are marshalled against us. He who would thus pray must cultivate tempers of daily spirituality, and to that end must shut out the world, the flesh, and the devil in their manifold disguises. Let us beware of all tainted excitements. Where the things which are adverse to God are thrust out the Spirit of God will surely come in.

It is an axiom in ventilation that unless there be an outflow for the vitiated air it is quite useless having an inlet for that which is pure. The winds of God's life-giving Pentecost will steal into us if we give free exit to every giddy pleasure which makes the Bible an insipidity, to every darling pursuit which conflicts with the perfect love of God, to whatever deteriorates the intellect, the conscience, and the affections. One of the fair cities of the earth is begirt with pine forests, and has streaks of silver sea about it on every side. Nature lies quite close to its streets and squares, and exhales there day and night the sweetest airs and the most reviving zephyrs. But if one of the citizens should shut himself in an air-tight compartment with the diseased, even in that fair city of health the result would be inevitable. If, on the other hand, all doors and windows be open, the invisible tides of mystic sweetness and strength cannot fail to lave him. The divine breath is always playing upon those who inhabit the true city of God. Let us make ourselves accessible to it at every point, and take heed that we do not shut ourselves in with the foul and deadly contagions of the world.

The tone of our daily speech and thought and life will react upon our prayers. Let us live to keep ourselves ever fit for this high intercourse with God, as the enthusiast in art or poetry or music lives for his work. A man cannot

walk according to the flesh, and then hastily exchange his environment for the Spirit when the hour of prayer strikes; just as a merchant passes half the day breathing the fog and grime and sewer-gas of the city, and when the clock strikes the hour of release, skips into a fast train, and before he has read his evening paper through finds himself breathing the ozone and sniffing the brine of the seashore.

Never grieve the Spirit who holds in His hand your very power to pray. He can sever at will your communication with the throne of all grace and power. In every circumstance of life follow His good pleasure, and whenever you appear before God He will enwrap your soul with this atmosphere of holy stimulation, and bring you into the very cloud where the eternal Father speaks holiest secrets to the Son and through Him to all who obey His word.

X

The Inward Intercessor

THE INWARD INTERCESSOR

The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.—Rom. viii. 26.

These words, which affirm that there is a divine intercession within us, complementary to and coincident with that carried on by the great High Priest in the presence of the Father's glory, stand almost alone in the inspired writings. The wonderful thoughts they suggest to us may possibly be anticipated in the title Paraclete, given by Jesus to the mystic Messenger who was to succeed Him in His immediate ministry to human souls; but the forecast is vague rather than specific and defined. It is reserved to an apostle who was not present at the Pentecost, but who, notwithstanding, is even more zealous than his fellow-apostles in magnifying the work of the Spirit, to bring before the Roman believer this uncommon view of a divine and authoritative pleading with God which takes place within us.

The view presented by this Scripture is not quite identical with that in which Paul speaks of "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," or with that set forth in Jude's memorable phrase, "praying in the Holy Ghost." In those texts man is viewed as a suppliant speaking on his own account, but helped by an atmosphere tremulous with spiritual vitality which the Holy Ghost throws about those who surrender themselves to His leadings. In this

text in the Romans, the human suppliant, weighted with his burden of infirmities, passes at last out of view, and the sharply defined personality of the Holy Spirit comes into the field of vision, and seems little less than a substitute for the helpless, staggering worshipper, even as Christ made Himself the redeeming substitute of the race in its guilt and penalty. The Spirit Himself becomes the intercessor, and the attributes and capacities of the human suppliant shrink for the time being into a place of secondary significance.

This correlated and interchanging action of the divine and human spirits asserts itself at every stage in the history of religious life. We are permitted to see it in the unfolding of the conscious experiences of the Son of man. In the faith which saves, an act of our own spirit is combined with an act of God's Spirit within us. Assurance is made up of a twofold witness. Sometimes man's own conscience seems to be the chief witness; but its voice is strengthened and sustained by that of the Spirit. And again the Spirit Himself is the leading witness; but He is supported by man's judgment and conscience, and it is in vital association with these that He quickens the sense of assurance. And we can follow out the interlacing of these dual agencies in prayer. Sometimes the man himself appears as the suppliant, and the Spirit helps his woeful shortcomings and hesitances. And then again the Spirit Himself seems to take the suppliant's case into His own hands, and represents it, and the suppliant has nothing to do but to remain passive or to quietly follow the will of the Spirit.

When we bring together the two aspects of prayer thus presented to us, we see that man's devotional life is like an ellipse with two distinct and shifting centres, or it

may perhaps be symbolised by those twin stars which revolve around each other. Prayer may sometimes seem to have its starting point in the act of the man, helped in his weakness by the Holy Spirit; and then again the larger and the truer discernment comes to us, and we see it to be the act of the Holy Spirit Himself in the consenting human soul, the man himself being the mere shrine in which prayer is offered by another rather than the priest who presents the prayer.

The heart's own solicitation of divine help, and the intercessory act of the Holy Spirit within that heart, may be so interfused that it is difficult for the saint to say whether his own experience would better fit the one or the other type. In this daring bit of analysis the apostle separates the stirrings of the soul from the divine force which is behind them, and shows us what the Spirit really does, so that we may learn to recognise our dependence on His help in all acceptable prayer. In prayer penetrated by the highest inspirations, the man himself seems to dwindle to a vanishing point, and the Holy Ghost presents his cause, and the cause of those borne upon his heart, as though the Spirit had become his representative before God. In times of peculiar susceptibility and exaltation the man may be definitely conscious of a separate action of the Spirit in his prayers. The Holy Ghost may manifestly take possession of us for awhile, and our individual powers lie almost dormant, and His sacred voice alone may speak in us to the great Hearer of prayer. On the other hand, there may be spiritual stages in which this inward ministry is less vividly disclosed to the consciousness, and we are only sensible of some subtle atmosphere of helpfulness diffused about us as we pray.

Do these two experiences described by the two sets of texts indicate different stages of development, one less

perfect than the other? At first we may be inclined to say that it is only in our extreme infirmity that the Spirit seems almost to push us aside and make Himself the principal in the offering up of our petitions, and in a higher life than this the powers of a man's personality may have become so vitally sanctified that the worshipping soul can create its own atmosphere of influence, and the saint get back full possession of himself. But the dominating presence and operation of the Spirit in Christ's sinless humanity, which is a prefiguration of ours, must not be overlooked, and the larger the place allowed to the faculties of the regenerated life, in our intercourse with God, the more vivid will be our own sense of the part still fulfilled by the Spirit in our natures. The more nearly we come to possess that purity of heart through which God is seen, the clearer will be our apprehension of an indwelling presence which still guides and stimulates us. It scarcely falls, however, within the scope of the apostle's purpose to make these different delineations of the work of the Spirit in prayer landmarks of the several stages of religious life and attainment. His main aim is to reaffirm of prayer what He elsewhere asserts of the whole process of our salvation, that human and divine elements co-operate. Our prayers avail nothing of themselves. They are only potent for blessing ourselves and others when that voice of divine help, which reiterates on earth the intercession of love in heaven, speaks within us.

In this epistle, written to extol the justifying efficacy of Christ's death, the work of the Holy Spirit is proclaimed in terms of co-equal honour. Like a deliverer to the beleaguered city, Christ comes, and with the price of His own blood ransoms the imperilled multitudes. But the inhabitants of the city are so emaciated by privation, terror,

pestilence, that they need something more than the advent of a great victor, unless his work is to prove in vain. They must have healing, nurture, gentle and gracious uplifting from the very brink of the grave, and at the beginning many things must be done for them which they are quite incapable of doing for themselves. Their steps must be guided, their frail, tottering forms upheld, their wants asserted by other lips than their own, if they are to find their way out of the city and reach the supplies which have been made ready for them, and pass at length to home, friends, and freedom once more. And so the Spirit, following the work of the redeeming Son, must come and help us at every point, and help us most of all in our prayers; for we can neither estimate aright the gravity of our own needs nor pray in ways agreeable to the settled principles of God's economies. The benefits of Christ's work must be brought home to us by the Spirit, His blood sprinkled upon our consciences, and His intercession before the throne repeated within reach of the inner ear and made one of the voices of our common life.

Objective and subjective religion, as the technical terms run, are sometimes put into a false opposition one to the other. Men decry what they are pleased to call a religion of introspection. The Christian faith, say they, is a series of historical facts, and up to that point all parties agree. Then they go on to say that these facts are presented to the senses and imagination and made inwardly efficacious by the great sacramental mysteries of the Church. The virtue of Christ's mediation concentrates itself in the material elements upon the altar, and by partaking of those elements the soul becomes united to Christ. So at least say many of our fellow-Christians. In Paul's view, however, the Spirit

alone, and no sacramental act, however precious and soul-strengthening, represents and reproduces within the believing spirit of man the mediatorial work of the true sanctuary. The Spirit in the believer shares the rights and prerogatives of our heavenly Advocate, and by putting them upon us constitutes us priests. He duplicates in the conscience the act which takes place at the Father's right hand, and makes inward to us the external facts of our faith.

"We know not how to pray as we ought." *The infirmities which have stamped themselves upon our fallen natures declare themselves most conspicuously in prayer.* All the errancies of thought, speech, temper shown in our homes and in our business tasks come back with cumulative penalty when we present ourselves before God. The hour of prayer is often the hour at which our misdeeds, like the curses of the old proverb, come home to roost. We expect to be strengthened by the act of worship, and how often do we find that its first effect is to discover our weakness and incapacity! And when our supplications have forced some sort of outlet for themselves, how defective are their qualities! Perhaps we are found praying for soft winds, smooth seas, smiles of fortune, exemption from pain, for money and position, for ease and honour for ourselves and our children, and our petitions are scarcely distinguishable in the range of their subjects from the petitions presented in heathen temples. We are asking for glittering toys, for sugar-plums, for spasms of happy sensation, when we should be asking for crowns, for empires, for those treasures which will make us rich towards God and entitle us to the princedoms of the coming eternities. Our prayers, unless mercifully taken in hand and amended by this monitor of the soul, express sordidness, folly, ineptitude, hallucination. A diseased perception

betrays itself at every step in our prayers. We are superficial, time-bound, false-seeing, like children weeping over trifles and incapable of taking to heart the great tragedies of life. Our sight is over-strong and punctilious for what is temporal, and vague and flickering when turned to things that are eternal. And this infirmity of perception is only matched by the paralysis of true affection. Our prayers are too often a strange revelation of hollow-heartedness. We lack large sympathies, world-enclasping compassions, desires which go out to what is divine in scale. And our faith perhaps most of all betrays our moral infirmity and degeneration. We might have no sense whatever of the deep secret of God's love. How hard it is to get into time and step with His counsels! Our prayers misconceive Him, and might have some chance of acceptance with a God made in the image of our unregeneracy. We do not discern God and His dispositions towards us and those for whom we pray, and we are as incapable of moving His mighty attributes to action as of shifting the pyramid of Cheops with the puff of a fan. Some of the qualities of God Himself must be merged into our prayers before they will be fit for His acceptance.

This Spirit who makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered obviously *deals with questions of surpassing significance.* There is a burden in His pleadings which is too great for words. We have so accustomed ourselves to irresponsible optimisms about the nature of sin, the high destiny of the undivided race, and the golden age of good beyond the grave, that we are becoming quite Greek or Parisian in our light-heartedness. Things, we are told, will one day work themselves right in every part of the universe, and we may spare ourselves the tears and struggles

which are the marks of pious but benighted weaklings. Fervour in prayer has long since passed out of fashion, and there is no urgent need why, like our agonising forefathers, we should bear in pain the burden of souls. Well, we may sometimes have overpainted the blackness of man and underpainted the resources of divine grace and compassion. Some parts of the picture need to be brightened up, but other parts cannot be made dark enough if the Spirit is a witness of that which is true. Man's most terrible view of sin is inadequate, for there is a surplus of unexpressed enormity in it, a reserve of unsyllabled torment and degradation which defies all expression, and can only be signified by that Spirit who pleads in us with groanings that cannot be uttered. It is impossible to state the virulence of its antagonism to the nature of God, and the measure of peril into which it puts the man who dabbles with it. The Spirit's sense of the sin from which men need to be delivered, of the grace which is the crying want of their lives, of the huge eternity for which they must be equipped, is immeasurable in terms of human speech, for speech has limitations no mind can surmount. It expresses little beyond what men have felt, believed, imagined in common, and the man who uses it with the most royal command of its possibilities is compelled to understate the bigness of the problems with which the Spirit deals through His intercessions within the saints. In the strongest thought, the most daring insight, the most passionate prayer, there is an utterly inadequate grasp of the solemn issues at stake. That was felt in the early Church, for the inspired excitement which could not shape itself into words found an outlet in unknown tongues. If the Holy Spirit dwell within us, He will express the unutterable. The Spirit not only comes as a minister of

joy, but to suggest in the supplications and intercessions of the saints a new sense of the terror and sadness of sin. In us, as in the humanity of Jesus, He links His healing and His help with strangely pathetic sighs.

St. Paul seems to intimate that the Spirit clothes prayer with *a power of persuasiveness which overflows the capacity of all human speech.* His importunacy is such that not the myriad tongues of earth merged into one could give voice to it. Human language is a wonderful product, and lends itself to soul-moving and effective appeal. In both sacred and secular literature it is possible to find striking illustrations of its force and resourcefulness. The pleading of the Canaanitish woman, whose lips had been taught the most exquisite feats of persuasion by the torn heart of motherhood within her, will at once suggest itself as an illustration of the former; and the guileless, prattling entreaties of the young Prince Arthur with the ruffian knight who had engaged himself to burn out the poor child's eyes, is perhaps the most striking illustration we can find of the latter. The young captive of the Tower observes that Hubert looks pale as he enters to carry out his savage task, and in his frank fondness the lad declares he would be glad if Hubert were a little sick, so that he might sit up all night and watch with him. When the warrant for this frightful act is shown, the poor boy reminds his guardian how he has caressed him in his ailments through many a weary midnight and hung upon his movements. Not even an angel should convince him that Hubert would put his hand to such work, no tongue but Hubert's could make the thing credible. When the executioners enter, he breaks out—

> O! save me, Hubert, save me! my eyes are out
> Even with the fierce looks of these bloody men.

The lad now begs that he may be left unbound, promising if that be granted he will be quiet as a lamb under the terrible mutilation. At last the affectionate, heart-moving prattle of innocence prevails, and Hubert gives up his loathsome task. That scene as Shakespeare has phrased it represents perhaps the high-water mark of human pathos and persuasion. But the Spirit goes beyond that in the transcendent earnestness and intensity of His intercessions. He represents within us a vehement beseechingness no language coined on earth can suggest. The wildest earthly lamentation cannot hint the grief of God's Spirit over sin, nor its most strenuous entreaties, His pitiful deprecation of the doom of those who live and die without God. Between the self-pity of the most forlorn and pain-maddened human sufferer and the illimitable compassions of the divine Fatherhood there is a margin of emotion which cannot be phrased, and the Spirit expresses that;—expresses it with the force of His infinite and eternal tenderness. "He maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The unutterable groanings which attend the intercessions of the Spirit within the saints *bring to mind the soul travail and strong cryings and tears of the One who bore our flesh* and had a perfectly unique sense of the sadness of sin. The Jews indoctrinated with the Talmud believe that the moral and intellectual qualities of a prophet who is dying before his work is consummated may pass into his designated successor and reinforce his character and personality. Perhaps the germ of that belief is to be found in figurative predictions about the reappearance of conspicuous teachers and reformers. If we may be allowed the illustration, the qualities of Christ's sorrow for the sin of mankind, His vicarious confession for

His people, His soul-moving entreaties for tempted servants and followers, His pitiful pleadings for callous tormentors, His wrestling for the deliverance of the race from darkness, reappear in that Spirit who succeeds Him in the direct guardianship of His Church, and the Spirit reproduces them in us. One of the profoundest mysteries in Jesus Christ, about which we hear comparatively little, is that He should never have sinned, and yet exhaustively have known the illimitable sadness inherent in every form of sin. He was made our flesh and bore our load of guiltiness, and had an insight into the moral suffering of human life no other being could match; and all that found utterance in the intercessions which both preceded and followed His sacrifice, and was communicated by intimate sympathy to the eternal Spirit who dwelt in Him, and is brought by that Spirit into our prayers. They become efficacious because the Spirit steeps them in the redeeming passion and soul-travail of Jesus Christ. Christ's far-ranging sense of our sore and infinite need is imparted to us by the Holy One who makes intercession within us, and in His unutterable groanings echoes the pleadings of our High Priest within the veil.

Paul goes on to remind us that because of this intercession the great Searcher of hearts who comes into the hidden spheres of the believer's life *finds hints of the unutterable* brought there by this inward Helper. Through this mystic ministry, purposes and dispositions are engrafted into the human soul which agree with the divine character and counsels, and God sees at last that His own mind is reflected in the saints. The saints learn to lisp a common language with the eternal throne, because one sent from that throne uplifts His voice within them, and the few simple syllables learned suggest that which is untold, and they receive

beyond all they can either ask or think. Just as when the earthly father catches his own accents, phrases, and modes of thought in the struggling speech of his child, he is touched by the pathos and mystery of this semi-resurrection of his own personality, and cannot say "nay" to the strange appeal without denying himself; so, when God hears His own voice speaking by the Spirit in the prayers of His people, the victory is won and prayer must prevail. In the voice of all ancient intercession God has been hearing the voice of His own eternal pity and compassion. God and Abraham, God and Moses, God and Samuel, are not taking opposite sides in those strange transactions in which it sometimes seems as though the prophet were more gracious than God, and had to win Him to clemency. In these holy intercessors of bygone days He caught wandering accents of His own exquisite and boundless patience and pity. When the interceding Spirit is suffered to steep our prayers in His sacred passion, God sees at last His own deep desires set forth as in a finite mirror, and the answer is then swift and sure. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Some traveller listens in his tent to the strange, weird, and cruel cries that shudder through the thick forest at night-time. There is nothing there in common with the tender home-feelings and affections which begin to stir within him after the excitement of the day. At last he hears the note of some bird common to his fatherland, and the melodies of an English coppice come rippling through his brain; or the south wind freshens, and he catches a familiar song borne from the camp fires of those who are marching to meet him; and he hears the very voices of his home again, and his soul leaps up in rapture and

sympathy. So when the follies and discords of our nature at last grow still, and divine voices speak in our prayers, God becomes one with us, and we are the glad heirs of all things. That is told forth within us which nature could not utter, and God is satisfied.

The Spirit of God needs the nature of the believer as a shrine in which to offer these intercessions, nay, more, as a living, conscious instrument through which to act in reflecting upon earth the sacred qualities of the mediatorial work carried on in heaven. It is only in and through the saints that He puts forth all the powers of His holy and mysterious nature for human help and salvation. Let us keep the shrine spotless and undefiled, the instrument in constant tune, the soul in such sacred accord and affinity with heaven that the intercessions of the Spirit can blend into it like light into the finest clouds. Prayer is sometimes felt as a penance because it has degenerated into a convention and is no longer an uprush of divine inspirations within us. Prayer will not be lightly neglected if we feel that the Spirit informs it with interests of indescribable weight and solemnity, and makes us understand something of the Redeemer's soul-travail for His people. We shall allow it to be more urgent than business, and all that business may involve, more urgent even than the affairs of state and empire. When we prepare to kneel in the secret chamber, or come up into the courts of God's house, let us remember that the Spirit is seeking souls apt to feel and quick to reiterate the voice which speaks before the throne, and let us cherish dispositions congenial to these high and divine uses. If we have occasion to employ a polyglot interpreter, it is necessary we should have one language in common with him, although his accomplishments

may be much wider than our own. And if the Holy Spirit is to help our limitations, and interpret to God our half articulate needs, there must be some elements in common between us. If we are frivolous, shallow-hearted, selfish, unspiritual, the Holy Ghost cannot touch us closely and deeply, and inform our prayers with those mystic passions which shall insure for them a grand acceptance before the throne of the Most Holy. If the soul is a Babel of conflicting tongues, His voice of inimitable help and advocacy will have no chance of being heard within us. Let us fit ourselves to be His channels, and to adopt into our natures the great and solemn aspirations of Him who pleads before the Majesty on high.

XI

The Teaching Unction and Common Knowledge

THE TEACHING UNCTION AND COMMON KNOWLEDGE

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.—Isa. liv. 13.
But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you and ye have no need that any man teach you.—1 John ii. 27.

In the writings of all the apostles, as well as in the anticipations of evangelical prophets, this place of the Spirit as instructor and guide of the elect individual is ungrudgingly recognised. James speaks of a wisdom that comes to every believing suppliant direct from the Father of lights. Paul speaks of an enlightenment and revelation that are gifts of the Spirit, and says that "no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost." And John speaks of "the anointing of the Holy One" through which all doubts may be resolved, and the lowly disciple made safe against current sophistry and error. Peter asserts that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. Such testimony coming from leading and honoured apostles has a peculiar emphasis and impressiveness about it. At the time of writing his epistles, John was in the last stage of his life. He was the only surviving apostle, and had been a chosen witness of the most significant things in our Lord's life. In the noon of His strength and popularity and in the midnight of His disgrace and pain John was there. He represented the culminating point of knowledge and apostolic authority; and yet in his epistle he settles nothing by official pronounce-

ment. He does not once remind the Churches of his more sacred personal right to be heard than the teachers of heresy. He appeals everything to the spiritually illuminated consciences of his readers and disciples. Take again Peter, who is supposed to represent a more august form of Church authority and prerogative than John. He also is loath to rest anything upon his own bare word, unless where he presents himself as an eye-witness of objective fact. He does not even refer to his own inspiration. He seeks to touch hidden springs and experiences in those to whom he addresses himself. "In both epistles I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." The aim of his writing was to revive dormant or obscured ideas. St. Paul, notwithstanding his own stores of biblical and eclectic culture, was eager that the faith of his hearers should stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. He, together with the rest of the apostles, knew that the only true and practicable test of faith was within. He would have laid the foundation of interminable schism and discord for the Church and distraction for Christ's followers if he had played off authority against competing authority. The best barrier against heresy which could be raised up was that which consisted in the common knowledge possessed by all who had received the Spirit, and none of the apostles shows the slightest jealousy of the growing insight of their converts. They were quite content that the Church official should be abased and even superseded, so that the work of the teaching Spirit should be magnified. In appealing every truth to the tests present in the souls of those anointed with the Holy Ghost, John and his fellow-labourers were laying foundations of steadfast catholic harmony and unwavering light.

It is *not for a religion of mere natural intuitionalism* that

John here pleads. The spirit of man has been degraded by evil, warped by prejudice and mistaken training, distracted and torn in opposite directions by the fickle and contradictory movements of a flesh inflated with egotisms and bubbling self-sufficiencies. It must undergo some radical transformation before it can become the test of what is true. One might as well call in a boiler-riveter organically deaf with the din of his occupation to settle conflicting criticisms respecting a quarter tone in music, or some spirit-drinker with burnt up tongue and palate to do the work of an accomplished tea-taster, as appeal subtle spiritual questions to such a court as that. It is true that God's voice speaks in the conscience of an unregenerate man; but till the conscience is enthroned supreme over the whole nature, we can have no assurance that one of the baser passions is not personating conscience and masquerading in its royal attire. Men sometimes speak as though the normal human mind were like a stud farm, where everything is of the purest possible strain. There is an unimpeachable purity of reason, and an unimpeachable purity of the affections, and an unimpeachable purity of the conscience, so that the natural intuitions will provide perfect and faultless ideals of truth. But it is otherwise. The human mind is rather like a desolated and wilderness land, in which clean and unclean, noble and mean, pure blood and mongrel herd together, and there can be no guarantee for the purity of the strain. The lower impulses sometimes vitiate that moral sense which is the direct inspiration of God before the moral sense formulates its intimations into speech and specific proposition. It is only after the Spirit has come to possess the nature of a man, and to make the undefiled conscience rule the life, that the nature can become in any sense a test of religious truth. The heart of man must be disengaged from its old

embarrassments and distractions, redeemed from the bias of its passion and wilfulness, chastened into docility and meekness and humility, quickened, purified, exalted, before it can discern. It is this specific anointing with the Spirit which confers upon the conscience its new prerogative as a competent judge of truth. When that unction descends upon men, it brings with it the discernment of spirits, and guards against the perils and deceits of intellectual temptation. All things needful to the welfare and progress of the divine life are thus brought within the range of knowledge.

The highest and indeed the only thing that can be addressed in an unrenewed man is his conscience; but till the Spirit is enshrined there, conscience is not uniform in its intimations and activities. Its moods change, its powers slumber, its visions sharpen and fade again; like a guide addicted to the whisky bottle, it may be splendid one hour and the next quite untrustworthy and half asleep. It was once instinct with clear moral discernments; but it resembles a learned man in his decrepitude, for it has forgotten much it originally knew. The anointing which abides destroys those ingredients of human nature which conflict with the work of the conscience, and makes the function of the conscience healthy, constant, vital.

When a strip of wood or forest has been destroyed by fire, it will sometimes happen that new and better species of trees grow up and take the place of those which have been burned. The seed had been long buried within the ground; but all to no purpose, because it was forestalled and overshadowed by the growths which first got possession of the soil. The earlier species were like feudal lords, who had seized the land and monopolised all the mists and the dews and the rains that came to moisten the sunburnt

earth. But in their downfall hidden and worthier seeds had a chance of light and life and dominion.

And is it not thus with human nature? The seed of every truth is within us, although there may often be little outward sign of that significant fact. The proud growths of the flesh overshadow, stifle, and choke down the inner growths of the conscience and the moral life. But at last the Spirit of God comes to us like a consuming fire, and then the superficial growths of passion and prejudice are burnt away, and seeds of sublime truth that had been slumbering from the time of man's creation in the image of God flower out into strange life, splendour, and fruitfulness.

If we accept this idea of the common knowledge possessed by believers in Christ who receive the promised Spirit, *what will be our attitude towards the Bible, the Church, the Christian teacher, and all those forms of religious authority so jealously upheld in the past?* Does not this idea of common knowledge introduce a competing authority, and bid fair to prove a solvent of ecclesiastical rule and prerogative, and produce a new confusion of tongues? The Churches of the Reformation rightly make *the Bible a test of faith*, and bring all teaching to the tribunal of its impartial balances. The New Testament is mainly a statement of historical facts from the lips or pens of eye-witnesses, to which there can be no addition by subsequent revelation. In so far as it is a statement of the doctrinal interpretations identified with those facts, it furnishes a permanent record of what was taught by the Spirit to the first generation of believers, and of what was approved and attested in their own experiences by those representatives of the early Churches who received the component parts of the New Testament into the canon. It gives absolutely trustworthy notes of the

work of the Spirit in saving and instructing and sanctifying men, just as a book like White's *Natural History of Selborne* mirrors the processes of nature, the movements of birds, and the succession of the seasons in an English village for a generation; and the record is good for what is taking place to-day. The unchanging Spirit is not likely to contradict Himself now, and teach divergent doctrines to a docile recipient of His ministries; and the Church whose members are inwardly led to the acceptance of the truths which accord with the original standards of the Bible proves itself so far a recipient of the same inspiration. When a man is applying for some position in which perfect accuracy of vision is necessary, or suspects that his sight is defective and consults an oculist, he is shown a card containing different lines of letters in type of different size, and by this method the range of his sight is measured and expressed in definite figures. But he is not so foolish as to take the cardboard of large and small type about with him to do his seeing for him. The Bible is a gauge of the degrees of spiritual illumination present in the early Church, and whilst intended of course to instruct us in the truth, is intended to instruct us first of all about ourselves. It is the scale by which we are to measure our own inspiration and spiritual insight; but it will not do our seeing for us, and each man must perceive for himself and acquire by the use of his spiritual senses this common knowledge.

But some to whom we rightly accord the name of Christians tell us that *the Church is the assay-house of religious thought*, and that all statements of doctrine must be weighed in the scale of ecclesiastical balances. What have the early councils said? What does the congregation of cardinals or the House of Convocation say to-day? Our

reply is that the spiritual discernment of the rulers of a Church must be tested by the scale or standard presented in the Bible and handed down from those who were themselves both personal followers of Christ and the first recipients of Pentecostal gifts. A Church may fall and grope in darkness as woefully as an individual, and then its authority ceases. The mere shell of a Church corporation cannot possibly be a centre of authority, for its directing *personnel* is ever changing, and if it be found in conflict with the primitive revelations of the Spirit, the very sanctity of the Church is lost and its right to teach forfeited. The book which reflects the undefiled truth imparted by the Spirit of truth to the first believers cannot change, but a mere institution may change with every new generation. The book tests us, tests the Church, and tests the religious teacher, and all who receive the Spirit are entitled reverently to test the book by the truth that is in them. John conceded this right of independent judgment to the early believers who received the Spirit. In some respects he seems to be less of a disciplinarian than Paul, and rarely seeks to suppress error by the use of an authority which at this stage in his life must have been almost indisputable. He refers again and again to the false teachers and prophets who were in the Church as well as in the world, and assumes that this barrier of common knowledge possessed by the spiritual will be a sufficient breakwater against the devastating tide. If the Church of believers receive this teaching unction, he is quite confident there will be a spontaneous expulsion of error from its borders. Indeed, that had already occurred in the past, for the antichrists who were not of them had already gone their own way. It may be that one of the providential reasons why error is suffered to grow up in the

Church and the world is that work may be put upon this error-repelling function in the rank and file of the membership, and that so believers may be driven to apprehend for themselves larger measures of that Spirit's presence and indwelling who teaches all things.

It is sometimes argued that *the teacher duly certified by the Christian Church is a specialist*, and that we must give ourselves implicitly into his hands, just as we give ourselves up into the hands of any other professional man who has the technical knowledge we lack. If a man is suffering from some affection which is sapping his strength, and he cannot tell what it is, he must trust his doctor; if he is making extensive alterations in his house, and is in doubt about the taste of a new wing, or the strength of a supporting wall, he must trust his architect; if he is uncertain whether the law will sustain him in a commercial step he is about to take, he must trust the opinion of his legal adviser; and so we must commit our spiritual life and the building up of our spiritual faith into the hands of an ecclesiastical expert. Well, we may recognise that within certain limits he who has not yet received the Spirit must be indebted for such second-hand knowledge as he possesses to the Church and its ministries. But, after all, there is no specialism in connexion with the truths which concern the daily life and experience of believers. All specialism is in non-essentials, and the cry for the specialist not only reflects on the impartiality of the Spirit, and implies that His illumination is particular rather than universal, but assumes that religion is a thing of intermittent rites and functions rather than a daily life in which the humblest is schooled to knowledge and insight. This idea of specialism is the beginning of every kind of arrogance and oppression within the Church.

It is the basis of professional caste, and lays the foundation of a new order of Brahmans who call themselves by the name of Jesus. This cry for specialists in the faith, this demand for tangible outward authority, arises from the fact that men are not spiritual, but are dominated by the combined indolence and materialism of their natures. To their unrenewed minds this anointing by the power of the Holy Ghost is vague, mystical, untrustworthy, and they want an outer court of appeal to which they can carry their questions. It is well that men should be cast back upon this inward guidance and reminded that they may be spiritual. "Ye have no need that any man should teach you." It will be the glory of the Spirit to bring about the unity of the faith, and to bring it about in men whose minds are both independent and free. The genuine catholic consensus of faith can only arise from a loyal and widespread individual acceptance of the Spirit as an infallible teacher and guide.

But is not this doctrine of the common knowledge that comes to men through the outpouring of the Spirit likely to prove itself *an occasion of bickering, schism, and disunion in the Church*? Unfortunately the independence of the individual in society as we now find it is often synonymous with egotism, insolence, and rebellion; but such evil things arise out of the bad passions of the human heart, and will be just as much present in covert form where the independence of the individual is absolutely unknown. The trees in an orange orchard are not more likely to revert to wildness or discover eccentricities of development because each tree has its separate root than the colony of trees in a mangrove swamp which are still affiliated to a primitive root. It is presupposed that those who receive the Spirit, the minister

of common knowledge, will be humble, meek, free from pride, and that heavenly, unlike earthly, knowledge will not puff up. Far from knowledge proving itself a separatist force, it will blend into fellowship. It is the thorough ignoramus who is glum, aloof, unsociable, ready to snap and snarl. Out of knowledge comes the affinity which knits rather than the repulsion which scatters, and the man who is taught of God is brought into the purest form of fellowship with the saints of every generation. No catholicity is possible apart from this anointing. Common knowledge will draw men together as common instincts gather birds into flocks and deer into herds for flight or defence. To find a parallel on the merely secular plane, the union of classes is far more likely to be brought about by the spread of common knowledge and the study of common literature than by the subjection of one class to another, which was the law of the old feudalisms of Europe. And the common possession of this Teacher, who abides with the separate disciples of God's Son to guide them into all truth, is far more likely to bring about the ideal of one faith than the old ecclesiastical feudalisms, which were once supposed to be the very keystone of Church unity. And besides all that, the separate discovery of saving truth each man makes for himself will give him an interest in the truth he could not possibly have if it came to him by tradition, and will invest him with unrivalled authority and persuasiveness as a witness.

But does not all this make a *recognised ministry of teaching and administration in the Church an impertinence and a hurtful superfluity?* By a statement of this purport, was not John cutting the ground from under his own feet and the feet of those associated with him in the oversight of Christ's flock? If there was "no need that any should

teach," why, forsooth, must he burden his tottering years with the task of writing this and similar letters? why appoint teachers in the Churches of Asia Minor to disseminate the faith and to interpret its meaning? Is it not a barren task for us to support an official ministry to-day? and would it not be well for us to copy those communities which preserve an evangelical leaven by common testimony and exhortation?

An official ministry may not be necessary to determine what truth is for the ideal Church consisting of men and women who have recovered the divine image and been made anew in knowledge and true holiness, and yet it may have functions of the highest possible importance to fulfil. The ministry may at least do what Jesse did for David when the prophet Samuel stood in the household at Bethlehem with his horn of anointing oil for the head of the elect king. It may go and fetch the absent and half-forgotten youth from his common tasks at the sheepfold, and place him at the feet of the anointing prophet. It may remind men of an anointing they have slighted and may soon come to finally forfeit. Many a recipient of this anointing is now and again found in a position like that of the Levite named in the Book of Judges, who had wandered northward to Dan, and who was ministering before an image of silver, although a scion of the priestly tribe. Many a man upon whom descends the Spirit of light and life has wandered from the sanctuary in which he ought to be standing, and is prostituting to falsehood and vanity the gift he had received; and the messenger of the Church may go to him in his far off wandering and debasement, and remind him of the light-bringing unctions and baptisms of the past. A voice may be needed to bring

to remembrance the fact that you once had clear, settled, life-moulding, and life-controlling views; but you have dishonoured the gift conferred in happier days, and all is dimness and abasement now. You may need a hand to lead you back in penitence and shame to the feet of the great Prophet and Priest, so that you may seek His forgiveness and ask again the old illuminations.

And other works are committed to this teaching ministry to fulfil. Whilst it cannot usurp the place of the individual conscience, and pronounce upon truth and define dogma for the congregation, it can press upon your attention questions you must test for yourselves. It can commend the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and say to the individual reason of those who in the last resort must choose for themselves, "Judge ye what I say." In most gold-mining centres there are assay offices to which the finds of precious metal are sent before consignment to the purchasers. But these assay offices do not supersede the different ranks of workers engaged in mining and stamping the ore, and carrying the ingots of gold from the mills to the testing centres. Indeed the assay offices would very soon be shut up apart from the other industries which are so zealously prosecuted day and night. And so the anointing which gives men the power of testing truth would soon become a worthless and disused gift, unless there were the constant activity of religious thought and teaching out of which the material for discrimination comes. The cry in the present day is for a ministry which will solve all the problems of religious faith, and such a cry is ignorant and miscalculating. The teacher must set the problems men have to work out for themselves under the guidance of this ever present Spirit. The Office of Weights and Measures,

found in every important municipality, would soon be unnecessary if no commodities were pouring into the town and all trade were to disappear. The different orders of the Christian ministry are like the labourers or distributers in a thriving business centre,—or at least they should be; they bring the materials which are to be submitted to those moral and spiritual processes of judgment which have been set up within you.

An official ministry, moreover, may gather up the voices of many hearts into one common confession of faith before God. It may act the part of the conductor at a musical festival, who, if he cannot put himself in place of the many voices and instruments of the performers, or make a shrill instrument soft, can at least by eye and hand marshal into one the many strains and voices present there. The teacher may be the channel for concentrating into a united expression the beliefs and convictions of the many. He may sometimes be able to syllable those spiritual discernments which many are unable at first to utter for themselves. But he is a teacher—one appointed to guide and stimulate men in the less mature stages of their knowledge, and those with whom he deals must spring at length into complete equality of inward knowledge and perception. The presence of the teacher must never be looked upon as an excuse from the obligation to grow. A time comes to every member of the Christian Church when it may be said to him, as to the believers addressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "For the time ye ought to have been teachers."

Wherever the tendency to fall back upon external authority in matters of faith appears, it is *a sign of ominous spiritual degeneration.* It means there is something in us which makes the presence of the Spirit unwelcome, and repels that

presence from our hearts. If we were reconciled to God and in harmony with His will, we should leap to embrace this high honour of being directly taught by God Himself. "Oh, but I am not fit to be directly taught! I would rather receive His message by the lips of the Church. God is so terribly holy." Well, it is by the pathway of direct teaching God wants you to be brought to Himself, and you will never feel your sinfulness as you ought, if you accept God's message only from a fellow-sinner. God seeks to make you alive to your sinfulness by making you receive all spiritual wisdom from His immediate presence, and you are thwarting His methods and doing despite to the blood which sanctifies by accepting your truth at the hands of human teachers, who cannot make you feel aright your sinfulness. No man or assembly of men can be the sponsor for your faith. God could not lay in such a roundabout way as that the foundations of universal judgment. If we are to be directly and individually judged, we must be directly and individually taught as a foregoing condition of it. Is there no sacrifice by which you may be cleansed and made fit to stand in God's presence of light? What a dishonour to take from another those revelations which the Spirit Himself may make within you! What a thoughtless insult to the Spirit of God's Son to hope you are absolved because lips of dust have declared it, when you may hear it from those lips into which infinite and deathless grace has been poured. The more spiritual the age becomes, the less disposition will there be to magnify the prerogatives of the Churches. The more carnal the age becomes, the stronger will be the tendency to idolise external authority and organisation. There can be no sure resting ground for the individual or the nation apart from this direct illumination

from God's presence. Your disquietudes and distractions of mind will cease when you receive that. "All thy people shall be taught of God, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

The effect of this anointing is *to confirm us in our union with Christ.* "But as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, ye abide in Him." The gift is permanent in its efficacy, and it guards us in an enduring relationship. It comes from Christ, and it shows the secret of its origin by taking us back to Him. The teacher of earthly things finds at last, often with more or less pain, that his pupil has grown into separation and independence, for the difference in the attainments of the two has become less and less with each succeeding year of study. That can never take place between the Teacher of heavenly things and the soul He indoctrinates with holy mysteries; for these mysteries are inexhaustible in their number and range, and the disparity of knowledge between the two can never be effaced. He has infinite stores of light and wisdom for us, and the man who is most fully taught is most deeply sensible, not only of a present, but of an endless indebtedness to Christ and the Spirit of Christ. He has no teaching to seek outside Him in whom all wisdom and knowledge are hidden, no new rules of life and conduct to test and discover, no new mediations to invoke, no new satisfactions to receive, no new forms of power to find in the world. The teaching of the steadfast Guide binds the disciple to Christ, in whom he must ever abide.

The oil with which Aaron and his sons were consecrated to their sacred tasks was to be strictly reserved for the purposes of the sanctuary. It was an offence of peculiar gravity to make a compound like it for common uses.

And this unction cannot be copied. No logic can bring the holy understanding it imparts, no inspiration of genius communicate the wisdom of which it is the solitary token and pledge. It must be received at Christ's hands and at His alone, for it is to assert His supremacy that the gift is jealously reserved, and those who humbly obey His word participate in His mystic light and grace. He is both Priest and Prophet, and teaches us still by this sacred presence in our hearts. Never think for one moment of Christ's prophetic office as though it closed with His three years' ministry in Galilee and Judæa. He addresses His people still by this living Messenger sent from the Father, and consecrates them to share His power and service.

Let us stir up the gift that is in us. Do we cry out because of the dearth of spiritual knowledge and conviction in our own natures? Are we perplexed? Be still. Let God respond by this presence, which is with us for this very purpose. The gift is not meagre, as our poor, superficial experiences might lead us to suppose. It is lavish as the anointing of the Son whose joint-heirs we are by faith. Some of us might have been anointed from the widow's cruse, so scant is the afflatus that comes to us and so circumscribed the area of our spiritual vision. This gift is free to all, and unstinted as the bounty with which the Father gave the Spirit to His Son. It descends to the hem of the High Priest's robe, and to the lowliest members of His mystical body.

XII

Lay Prophesying

LAY PROPHESYING

Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets!—Num. xi. 29.

Enriched by Him in all utterance and all knowledge.—1 Cor. i. 5.

These Old Testament histories are stamped with suggestive and far-reaching analogies, which will always save them from oblivion and neglect, for they illustrate not a few problems of the after centuries, and supply the key to their solution. Is inspiration an ecclesiastical monopoly? Do the signs of its sacred influence appear only in the channels in which great Church leaders tell us to find it? Does the wisdom that is from above come to those who conform to certain specific canons of ecclesiastical observance and pass by all others? Is it possible that men who are outside the orthodox successions and who have never sought the consecration of legitimate human authorities to their tasks may be moved by the divine breath, and become the vehicles of God's truth and saving power? These questions, which divide Christendom as great mountain chains divide continents, are anticipated in the analogies of the striking narrative in the Book of Numbers, and unmistakably answered. No man, however great in personal character and sacred in official rank, has the right to direct the pathway of the Spirit, and say who shall receive or be denied His kindlings of spiritual wisdom.

These two men upon whom the spirit of prophecy came in a very uncommon manner were not found with the seventy who had ranged themselves before the cloud-covered tent of God. For some reason or other they had not submitted to the appointed form through which the supernatural gift of Moses was to be conferred upon his helpers. Possibly they may not have been summoned by Moses to participate in his spiritual leadership, although they were amongst the elders who had been appointed at an earlier stage in the wilderness life to secular work and responsibility. It may be that Moses chose by lot the seventy who stood before the tabernacle, or he may have singled out those who seemed best fitted by their knowledge and spiritual insight to share the more purely spiritual burdens of his position. Eldad and Medad were on the roll of elders, but may have been passed by in this special ceremony which was to designate a number of the elders to a common authority and inspiration with Moses himself. Or perhaps Eldad and Medad may have themselves declined attendance at the tabernacle from a selfish wish to escape new responsibilities. If they had heard Moses complain of his wasting cares and burdens when the cry of weeping arose in the camp, they may have thought it would be better to avoid such tasks as were well-nigh breaking the heart of one confessedly holier and stronger than themselves. The signs of disaffection that were appearing through the whole congregation may have led them to shun an office that, for the time being at least, was bound to be more or less unpopular if faithfully fulfilled. Why should they expose themselves to the clamour of the crowd by trying to interpret God's purpose of judgment to His people, and by rebuking their ingratitude and unbelief? Unpalatable words needed to be

spoken. Or more likely still, for the Spirit would scarcely have seized upon cowardly and politic time-servers, and made them the mouthpiece of the divine message, they may have been deterred by genuine humility. They were ready to sit in the seat of the magistrate and arbitrate in common things as far as their natural sagacity would carry them, but they were scarcely prepared to enter into the amazing spiritual experiences of Moses, and exercise the most sacred functions of his prophetic office. They did not desire this supernatural honour. Like Moses at an earlier stage, they manifested a diffidence which almost passed into a sin of opposition to the divine counsels, and they hesitated to take their stand by the side of Moses when God came down to the tent of meeting to illuminate His chosen messengers and energise their faltering speech.

If Moses had left them uncalled, he would look upon this incident as God's reminder of *the limitations attaching to his own best judgment.* In his survey of the situation he passed by some who were eminently qualified to hear and echo the divine word. There was to be no monopoly of inspiration for the college this great ecclesiastical statesman was constituting. By overpassing the ring-fence of this consecration rite, moreover, God was proving that He was just as much present in the camp as in the tabernacle. The heaven-sent fire which cleanses the lips and possesses the heart with a passionate apprehension of the unseen is not a gift for the sanctuary only, but also for the home. In after years God again and again passed by the man trained in the schools of the prophets, and took hold of the shepherd, the herdsman, the tiller of the vineyard and the field, the carpenter. It was perhaps a type of the methods of His coming dispensations that the light of holy vision should overflow official

limitations and strike in amazingly upon the souls of the two who tarried in the camp, as well as upon the seventy who stood reverently in the presence of the cloud.

We find a parallel incident in the New Testament. God does not always fall in quietly with the officious nominations of His true Church even. When Matthias was chosen by lot to fill the vacant place in the apostolate, it is quite possible the eleven were exceeding their instructions, for in the charter the Master gave them there was apparently no word about filling up vacancies, by lot or otherwise. Matthias was doubtless a good man, and did excellent service in his own particular groove; but we are not aware that any special baptism of wisdom and power came to him, or that he accomplished work more vital than that done by hundreds outside the apostolate. But the Spirit came in extraordinary measure upon one not taken into the apostles' college, and who, without any formal recognition at their hands, and upon the barest sufferance, did the most conspicuous work of them all; and the accents of his prophetic message are still lingering in our midst. When a Church has received the utmost of divine grace and favour, it needs to be reminded that the work of the Spirit is larger than its own borders, and that God's sovereignty far transcends human elections and forecasts.

The *tolerance of Moses* under what might have seemed a slight upon his authority deserves our careful study and imitation. This incident of lay prophesying excites the envy of Joshua, and he prays Moses once for all to interdict the extravagance. Like James and John, who would have closed the lips of an unattached benefactor who was casting out devils in Christ's name, and yet did not join the company of the Galilæan followers, Joshua had very little sympathy

with irregular outbursts of religious enthusiasm. This temper may have been excusable, for his military instincts tended to make him a martinet, and he was comparatively young, and less experienced in the deep things of God than Moses, and after all, was jealous on behalf of another rather than for himself. From his standpoint, to uphold the prestige of Moses was one of the first of all civil and religious duties. This frank-hearted and chivalrous man could not forget the signs and wonders and mighty deliverances wrought by the hand of the veteran leader, and it seemed only right he should be honoured and obeyed in even little things. But in the large heart of Moses there is no trace of envy, no disdain for irregular upstarts, no cynical wish to frown on unauthorised outbursts of zeal. There are two forms of tolerance in the world: the tolerance that comes from an entire lack of conviction, the cheap liberty accorded by the unbelieving indifferentist; and the tolerance which is the outgrowth of fixed conviction and sharply accentuated faith. The tolerance of Moses is the tolerance that marks the man who is wise and great and tender, with the benign and generous influences of the ripening years, the tolerance of one who is so eager to see God's work done in the world, and so sensible of his own unfitness and insufficiency, that he does not care very much by whom or in what way it is done, so that the goal is reached. We sometimes worship the punctiliousness which is man's blundering attempt at order as though it were an end rather than a means. We like form, discipline, finely adjusted organisation, and we set our hearts more passionately upon these things than upon the great objects to which God is seeking to lead forward the race. Zeal is greater than all expediencies, and we have no need to

be jealous about trifles where the Spirit of God is taking the work into His own hands. The only test we have the right to apply in any generation is this, Are our neighbours stirred up to speak the right message? Are the voices of testimony we hear fitted to silence the voices of rebellion and unbelief? Clerical castes are sometimes jealous of lay teaching. Irregular movements are discouraged, unless their promoters will kneel to receive the blessing of the Church. Let us show a kind side to religious zeal wherever it breaks out, lest haply we be found fighting against the Spirit of the Lord. Be it ours to breathe the magnanimous prayer, "Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets!"

The man who is jealous of any infringement of his office when uncertified allies come into the field is convicted at once of thinking more of the distinction which office confers than of the work for the promotion of whose interests all office is constituted. Office is just the little circle of space made round a man, so that he may have elbow room for the exercise of his gift. Office presupposes a gift, and a gift presupposes a work for the furtherance of which it has been bestowed. In God's plan office exists for the sake of the gift, and the gift exists for the sake of the work; so that office is the least important thing of the three. The living organism always comes before the mere shell it inhabits. It is not the office which precedes and begets the gift, but the gift which creates the office; and both alike exist for the far-reaching ends that wait to be achieved. To discover, encourage, and attest a gift where it exists comes within the legitimate authority of the Church and its leaders; and perhaps in nine cases out of ten that is done. But in the tenth case the Church withholds its warranty and approval where the genuine gift exists, and in the next tenth case it

certifies where there is no gift at all, and then claims that the mere empty shell of office must be respected for its own sake. It is sad to find at times that men who have a veritable spiritual vocation themselves grow irritable and intolerant if anything is done which looks like intrusion upon their professional preserves. The hard and acrid theologian is sometimes jealous of the divine voices that speak in pagan literature, and, like the scribes, who were verging on blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, declares that these voices are ventriloquistic feats of the devil himself. Now and again the ecclesiastic waxes angry at the voices which speak truth in secular literature, and assumes that the Church needs no outside help from what he is pleased to call the world. That is a sign of grave delinquency and defect. Such men have been warped by unsanctified ambition, and think more of the revenues of honour their work is to bring them than of the actual work itself. The man who is truly bearing the burdens of God and of God's people will welcome help from any side; he will look, not only with tolerance, but active sympathy upon whatever agencies may help the faith of men. It is a high tribute to the uncommon qualities of the character of Moses which this incident accords. His exclamation proves that he was consumingly zealous for God's work, and quite free from greed of personal honour and distinction.

This exclamation indicates *complete loyalty to the authority of God in the choice of His own instruments.* Such an attitude befitted the reverential temper of one who had stood in the cloud of the awful Presence, and had heard things too vast for human words. Moses had trembled before the divine power, and had long learned how futile it was for him to dictate the divine election, or to rightly read the last letter

of its mandate. It is true he was a prophet, and in bidding the men who seemed best qualified for sharing his inspirations to marshal themselves before the tabernacle, so that they might be baptized into his spirit, he was faithful to his own best discernments. And yet it would have been presumption to claim that he or any other prophet knew all God's mind, and that his own choice, however wise and prayerful, was exhaustive, and left no further room for the sovereign choice of God. How different the past history of the Church might have been if a niche had only been left for the providential man overlooked in the best human arrangements. The Church has too often assumed that it is God's plenipotentiary, reflecting the mind of God in such exhaustive detail that its choice can never be revised or supplemented by the overruling sovereignty of the Spirit. After bidding men to its various branches of service, it is not unfrequently tempted to think that the full complement of workers is enlisted, and that there is nothing but a cheap residuum outside, from which God is not at all likely to choose. But again and again God is found putting the stigma of folly upon the Churches by calling to high inspirations and conspicuous service men whom the Churches have passed by or declared disqualified through inattention to some superfluous rite or punctilious behest. Again and again the voice of effectual prophecy is heard outside the Churches, and sacred and blessed work is done by men whom we dogmatically classify as irregulars. Let us honour God more, and abstain from fighting by our intolerance against the high decrees of His spiritual administration When the gift of the Spirit seems to come to a man not of our following, let us recognise it. The man is wanting in true reverence, and has little sense either of the pettiness and

superficiality of his own knowledge or of the deep counsels of the Most High, who assumes that Church designations are exhaustive, and that the most correct lists and inventories take in all God's chosen instruments. He who, like Moses, has been nearest to God will be least disposed to prohibit the irregularity which is loyal to cardinal truth and zealous for the kingdom of God amongst men.

In looking with favour upon this outbreak of irregular prophecy, Moses had *faith in his own spiritual instincts and perceptions*. He knew that God was not shut up in the few cubic feet of the sanctuary, and was prepared to expect the descent of divine power upon the whole congregation, and Moses had enough of the genius of the prophet in him to recognise those who came under the same inspirations. Holy man that he was, he had a sagacious sense of affinity with all those into whose souls the breath of God came. Men nowadays are far too carnal to try the spirits whether they be of God, and they want the true and the false prophets to be distinguished by something which addresses the outward eye, like the party colours pinned on at an election or a boat-race. Does he wear the prophet's garb? Has he received due license at the hands of his predecessors in the service of the truth? Does he echo the proper crusted and cobwebbed formulas? Has he the most fashionable university accent? We stamp ourselves as woefully unspiritual when we try to prove the message right by the supposed office of him who utters it. We must rather test the office by the message, and the message itself we must test by its spirit and import rather than by its letter; for black heresy of temper may sometimes lurk under orthodox words, as in the evil spirit rebuked by Christ which so sanctimoniously confessed Him to be "the Holy

One of God." We must try the spirits whether they are of God, and that will not be a formidable task if God be with us as He was with Moses. A judge's verdict is not shown to be unassailable by producing any number of witnesses to testify that the man who gave it wore ermine.

This exclamation seems to imply that *the enlightenment and exaltation of the prophet was the ideal of attainment* Moses cherished for each separate member of the elect race. The common man must come at last to stand as near to God as the privileged souls through whom God spake in the earlier stages of the world's religious history. Priestly and prophetic gifts were to be the common birthright of God's people in the last times, and in his yearning after that Moses was a forerunner of those who more specifically announced the promise of the Spirit to be poured upon all flesh. His prayer was answered in part when the days of devout expectancy were fulfilled, and the Holy Ghost descended upon all classes, women sharing the prophetic gift with men, and rude slaves seeing visions equally sublime with those of their more cultured masters. The Pentecost begins a levelling-up process parallel to that which we see going on in the history of the nations around us. The average workman to-day eats food and wears raiment princes might have envied five hundred years ago, and his children have a knowledge which not many generations back was a monopoly of the favoured few. And as the forces of social reform and statesmanship and philanthropy have been slowly lifting the classes around us, God takes care that the law of progress in spiritual spheres shall not be less marked. Prophets and seers are not hopelessly separated from the mass of their fellows. They stand on vantage ground to which succeeding generations are passing as they

realise their evangelical rights and possibilities. Nay, our vision outstrips theirs, for we see things which kings, prophets, and righteous men strained their eyes in vain to catch. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!" means, May those whom He has called out of the world rise to the full standard of their vocation, and see the glory of the Lord, and have strong insight into His will, and recover that intimate converse with God lost by the fall!

This large aspiration implied *a clear, strong sense of the magnitude of the work to be done* in God's earth. It could arise only in the heart of one who was serving the Lord of all mankind, whose religion had in it a principle of wonderful expansiveness, and who realised that the law he was appointed to promulgate was world-wide in its applications. To wish that the race might become a race of prophets was one and the same as to wish that all the nations of the earth might be discipled into submission to Jehovah's truth and righteousness. One wonders how Moses, whose name in after ages was unfairly associated with narrowness, rose to this wider conception of religion. Did he after so many years still think lovingly of that fair and pitiful foster-mother, the Egyptian princess, who was not one of the elect race? and were his thoughts drawn through that channel into sympathy with that greater world she represented which stood outside the covenant? Did he think of early teachers, patrons, and benefactors who cherished him with wisdom, kindness, and generous hospitality, and long to requite their services by making his own race an army of inspired missionaries to their descendants? Was he bound by happy and affectionate memories to the guides and counsellors of his youth, and unable to bear the idea that

they belonged to a race for which God had no word of promise and no benediction of peace in reserve? Did the promise subsequently made to Moses, "All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord," respond to this devout and liberal-minded aspiration? When Moses expressed the ardent wish that his own gift and the gift of these two irregular prophets might be multiplied by the total number of elect souls, he must surely have been steadying his gaze to look forth into this larger horizon.

God's work in the world will never be done till the devout desire of Moses is realised. It is impossible for professional preachers alone to compass that work. Far be it from us to open the floodgates of unrestrained talk. We do not want the tumult of an over-excited Corinthian Church, and we are perhaps sufficiently protected against the peril by our broader education and our more phlegmatic temperaments. But we are in imminent danger of over-praising the virtue of an ignoble silence. Every man, woman, and child who has come under the power of the Spirit, and is able to articulate, ought to say something for the furtherance of God's kingdom in the world. The primitive fiddle had only one string, and many a performance may be heard in Eastern countries on instruments furnished with only two. In some districts that is the ideal of Church order,—the string that twangs at the reading desk or in the pulpit, and the string that quavers in the clerk's pew. An instrument ciphering through fifty per cent. of its notes would be worth little, and yet that is an over-favourable description of the average Church membership in some places. We need the vibrating volume of many other voices if the world is to be captivated and won. Let the minister be the keynote if you will, but do not expect him to do all

the speaking and praying. If every member of the Church had the prophetic gift, it would be an easy task to touch all the households of the city. If every communicant in Christendom had the prophetic gift, the world would be won in a generation. Like the Israelites of old, we shall probably be murmurers and miserably garrulous on the wrong side if we are not found talking for God. To every man, woman, and child in our midst the soul-purifying and soul-inflaming breath must come. Permit yourself to obey the sublime constraint when it is felt. Many a prophet has been repressed,—repressed in some cases by his own diffidence and in others by the criticism of those who ought to have known better. Many a significant inspiration has been stifled because the man has allowed himself to be persuaded into the illusion that he is no talker. If you are mute, the Spirit can make even the dumb to shout. Put away that morbid self-consciousness which gives the devil as much power against you in your vocation as sin. Give yourself up to the will of the Spirit. Be an irregular prophet if you will, but remember it is better to wait before the tabernacle. Every man in the seventy who consecrated themselves prophesied, but Eldad and Medad were two men out of a million. The world will never be won till the prophetic gift rests upon all. A Church may have princes, statesmen, and millionaires amongst its worshippers, but its conditions after all are mean and beggarly till, like the Corinthian Church, it is enriched by Him in all utterance and in all knowledge.

XIII

The Spring of Benignity in the Saints

THE SPRING OF BENIGNITY IN THE SAINTS

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.—Isa. xliv. 3.

He that believeth on Me, . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.—John vii. 38.

The two ringing annunciations with which Christ closed His ministry in the temple at the Feast of the Tabernacles, must be looked upon as closely connected with each other, or we shall miss some at least of the stimulating suggestions with which they are fraught. The thirst of the human soul cannot be permanently satisfied if the Spirit conveyed by Jesus Christ is thought of as a source of personal gladness and prosperity only. In addressing the woman of Samaria, the great Teacher had described His gift of the Spirit as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. But there must be outlet as well as inflow, or the well will be little better than a choked and stagnant cistern. The benediction brought to us by the Spirit will soon be dissipated if we treat it as a personal monopoly. The soul efficaciously inhabited by the gracious Comforter cannot be self-occupied, or absorb into its own narrow life, like a greedy, unplumbed abyss, the streaming gladness He ministers. The sweetness of vital religion will flow out of the man who truly possesses it into others, as lavishly as it comes into his own being. The thirst of a godlike

nature cannot be quenched if the peace and consolation of assurance are to remain unshared, and there is no reaching out of sympathy and spiritual influence towards mankind. It is, after all, little better than a gilded and luxurious imprisonment to be shut in with the comfort of one's own individual religion only. The Spirit can bring so little of the divine blessedness into some natures, because they are mere Dead Seas, and the whole year through are taking in without giving out. If there be no currents of benign activity setting from us to others, the very truth that is in us will stagnate, our peace will vanish like the "spate" that follows the storm, and the sweetness with which it was the Spirit's purpose to imbue our lives will turn to wormwood.

Jewish religion in Christ's day had become shrunken and moribund because it was self-concentrated. True, it was once a part of God's providential purpose that His ancient people should be separated from the rest of the world, so that they might guard the purity of the truth committed to them till the fuller measures of revelation had come, and they were strong and spiritual enough to be God's messengers to the Gentiles without danger to themselves. But this providentially prescribed and legitimate isolation they had allowed to pass into indifference and contempt towards the Gentile world. It fitted the pride and selfishness of human nature to think that the divine promises should be the heritage of one family only. Churches sometimes copy the old Jewish spirit, and become so select, stereotyped, self-occupied, that neither home nor foreign heathenism has any place in their plan of campaign. Such Churches uniformly fail to keep the truth pure for themselves and their children, and become nests of elegant wretchedness and death. Wherever the Spirit dwells, there

is the restless and perpetual outgoing of sympathy and soul-alluring helpfulness towards the guilty and suffering world. Churches which "economise" and "concentrate their resources," as the phrases in which we are accustomed to whitewash selfishness and lethargy put it, are at the antipodes to Christ's conception of belief in Himself and the active and outspreading beneficence which is the unfailing consequence of such belief.

The life through which the Holy Ghost graciously operates for the help and salvation of the world must be *a life of faith* in the Son of God. Upon that condition alone can disciples receive the power which both impels towards and qualifies for the wonderful achievements to which they are designated. These magic rivers of welcome revival never yet bubbled out of unbelieving souls. "Received ye the Spirit," asked Paul of the Galatians, "by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith"? Whilst the strictest ethical preparation is necessary if the Spirit is to make His home within us, and instruct us in the art of blessing men, it is faith and faith alone which opens the nature to His majestic presence. And that is just as true of all the achievements of the after-life as of the first glad salvation He works out within us. If our pathway in the world is to be one of blessing, our faith must receive the Spirit at Christ's hands, not as a mechanical force only, but as the applied principle of a complete and symmetrical character and experience. We hear men talk and pray at times as though they could be blind, insensate channels for the communication of the Spirit to the world, without a daily conscious acceptance into their own natures of His sweetening and sanctifying grace. They look upon themselves as though they were so many impassive wires, along which

the power of the Spirit must fly; mere carriers, so to speak, of a packed up force, which will by and by operate upon others. But the Spirit must first show forth His virtue in us according to our faith before He can act upon our neighbours. He must be a Spirit of revealing truth in us before He can go forth from us to illuminate the world. He must be a Spirit of conviction in us, making us mindful of our errancies, before He can lead the world to penitence. He must be a Spirit of assurance in us before He can chase the fears and dry the tears of a mourning world. He must be a Spirit of holy, tender, undefiled charity in us before He can assimilate the world to Christ's great law of love. And all these things the Spirit becomes to us through faith. Let Him thus work in us, that He may have free course in the world. Some districts are riverless, not because the rain never falls, but because the soil for a great depth down is so porous that the rainfall passes through it like a sieve. The district that cradles rivers must have a soil and underlying formation that will hold the rain like a sponge. And the graces and virtues present in the character whose root-principle is unfeigned faith hold the benign influences of the Spirit as in hidden fountains and storehouses, so that the world may be blessed by the steadfast outflow.

Christ implies in this temple announcement that *a law of succession is to govern the method by which the life-giving Spirit is communicated to the wider world.* That law, however, is much broader than current ecclesiastical glosses would make it appear. It is a distorted form of the doctrine which teaches that the grace of the Spirit descends through a line of artificially designated Church officials rather than through the common membership. We sometimes hear it argued that because the apostles laid their hands on those

who desired the special gifts of the Pentecost, we must find out whether every link in a chain of orders running through eighteen centuries is sound and valid, so that we may receive the Holy Ghost through those functionaries who happen to be the last links in this historically complex chain. Christ's definition of the terms of this succession is simpler in form and far easier of application. His strong, ringing word shatters all official qualifications, and brings to an end all reserved rights. "He that believeth in Me." A nameless and undecorated disciple may fulfil the condition as completely as an apostle. I have all the spiritual prerogatives of the original primacy myself if I believe, and by the sympathy of my faith may convey this life-quickening Spirit to others.

It is well to remember that there is a sense in which the successive communications of the Spirit do not imply a new and independent gift from heaven, as though some break had come into the continuity of His ministry to the souls of men. The Holy Ghost, whilst obeying at every moment of His operations the direct mandate of the Father and the Son, has not to descend upon us afresh from heaven. He tarries in His human temples, waiting to extend the virtue of His work to others, and to renew and hallow men everywhere through the agency of those who have first believed. In this way God attests again and again the interdependence of the race, and makes one man the instrument of another's sanctification. True, there is in every heart a half developed and preparatory work of the secret Spirit; but He can only come, in all the richness of His evangelical gift, and in a conscious indwelling of mighty power, to those who are about us through us who already possess His grace. Some, it may be, will never receive the Spirit in His fulness unless they receive Him from us. Oh,

what honour and what responsibility this fact puts upon us, and what a motive to holiness it constitutes! If the river of life that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb is to reach our children, our friends, and contemporaries, it must be through the channel of our life and influence. Let us see to it that we keep the channel deep and free and clean. We are Christ's heirs on earth as well as in heaven, and He expects much from us, as He expected much from the first groups of disciples. Although the sentence of death had gone out against Him, He was comforted by the thought underlying this utterance, that the source and secret of His benignity should pass to others, and that through their faith in His person they should become instruments of sanctity and blessing to the world.

It is *the power of the individual believer*, moreover, which this declaration magnifies to all but incredible proportions. This imperial promise will seem all the more striking if we remember the circumstances under which it was uttered. The decree that Christ must die, it was generally understood, had gone out from the official assembly of the Jews, and during this visit at the Feast of Tabernacles the signs of calculated and fatal hatred had once and again appeared in the temple courts. Indeed, the peril was such that it was a moot question whether Christ would show Himself at the feast. Daily attempts had been made to lay hands upon Him, and it had become quite evident that He was not to find in the collective nation and its rulers an instrument for His regenerating work. It was at this depressing crisis Christ looked forward to those new endowments of power that should come with the descent of the Spirit to solitary believers, and in ringing accent and majestic similitude declared the commanding influence of the faithful disciple

over the fortunes of the world. He who has the Spirit of God is a prophet and has the word of God, and so realises the accomplishment of God's pledge about the unfailing mission of the word, which Isaiah compares to the snow and the rain. We join in those divine and invincible processes through which God renews mankind. This promise seems to clothe the individual believer with such wonderful prerogatives, that an attempt has been made to limit the reference to Peter or to some other conspicuous member of the apostolate. But Christ would not be at all likely to foster the temper of partisanship amongst His disciples by an invidious prognostication of the personal future of any one of them. And if this word had been intended as a specific prophecy of the influence of some particular man, it would not have been addressed to the promiscuous crowds in the temple, and cried with the high-pitched note of the herald. This message is a public challenge,—a challenge not only to the crowds in the temple, but to the after-generations of time, and it is free to each of us to take up the challenge and put Christ's message to the proof. The believer anointed with the power of the Holy Ghost is stronger than the unbelieving nation, and may bring to pass that for which a multitude of formalists is helpless.

Nations are greater now than then, and, like the Jews of old, we assume that the co-operation of overwhelming majorities is necessary in bringing to pass some of the crying reforms of the hour. We must have the empire, and indeed confederations of empires, behind us, if we are to leave the world better than we found it. The individual shrinks, and the age of heroes and giants and colossal reformers is fast passing away. We want collective action, parish councils, county councils, imperial legislation, to heal our

social sores. Such methods of action must not be despised, but God can do more by the spiritual individual than by the compact nation which is nominally Christian. The mere mute whose lips are touched with the fire of the Holy Ghost will sway his fellows more effectually than the godless Demosthenes under whose banner shoals of nations enlist themselves. The fool who becomes wise and strong with this infallible guidance will make after generations his debtors when the most astute diplomatist is forgotten. We have no need to wait for united action, for great majorities to back us, for the waking up of a slumbering Church, for nations to adopt our schemes, for numbers to inspirit us with a fallacious sense of power. The true power is to the individual who will resolutely and unreservedly trust Christ.

These words remind us of *the essential diffusiveness of the religion which has faith for its ruling principle* and the presence of the Holy Ghost for its daily heritage. The scale according to which we receive the Spirit must not be that of our own personal necessities only or the demands of the passing opportunity. As the Spirit dwelt in Christ with inexhaustible spontaneity for the sake of the larger humanity He had come to bless, as well as for Himself, so must it be with us. However narrow the visible measurements of our life, if we receive the fulness of the Spirit we shall touch the entire world through those subtle and expansive forces which brood within us. We are sometimes humbled because our sphere of action seems so cramped and circumscribed. We long for wider fields. We should like to be the instruments of divine activities which will affect continents and live through centuries. But into what a little space our aspiring natures seem to be shut up! There are Christians,

excellent in character and rich in mental gifts, whose influence seems to go no further than the home, the shop, the office, a select coterie of friends. If the Spirit is in us, however, these mystic rivers will flow forth, and for the honour of Him whose name we trust the Spirit will see to it that our opportunities are imperial in their magnitude. We shall affect for good the fortunes of many lands, and our destiny shall be large and resplendent as our best aspirations. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred we will not let our influence take wings and pass through its appointed realms and latitudes. The panting springs can find no outlet, and the Spirit is restrained because those are so narrow who give to Him an earthly home. Our religious toleration, for instance, we carry to an extent that is simply sinful. We see men in process of being ruined, and, forsooth, we do not wish to interfere with their "religious convictions," as we call them,—just as if any man's convictions were worthy of respect when they do not keep him from sin! We think of ourselves as wells to which our neighbours may come if they wish; but the murmuring streams are forced back into the fountain-head, and wells become little better than cesspools. There must be an onward-pushing force in our religious life. The infinite is in us if we are filled by faith with the Spirit of Jesus, and the infinite must inevitably contract itself unless we give it adequate place in our lives. The goal of our vocation is not paltry and parochial. We are not filled with the living water so that we may just flush local drains and quench village thirsts. There are divine forces within us which are seeking an outlet vast as humanity, and must be subjected to no restraint.

Let us look well at the large and many-sided metaphor in which Christ sets forth the beneficent influence of the man

who receives the Pentecostal gift. He compares it to rivers of waters, dense networks of streams in some world-famed delta which minister untold prosperity and enrichment.

One only needs to visit a tropical or subtropical latitude to see *how priceless is the service rendered by the great steadfast rivers to the lands through which they flow.* No wonder some of the heathen nations should make the flowing waters on which they depend for their very existence a chief object of worship. The river fulfils a godlike mission. Egypt is made by the Nile, and every square yard of country beyond the reach of its waters is worthless. Abanah and Pharpar with their companion streams are the very veins through which life flows into the blooming oasis of Damascus. The Tigris and the Euphrates nurtured the wonderful prosperity and civilisations of the cities that towered upon their banks. The mysterious tides of primitive migration followed the river valleys, for even the rude nomad was alive to the influence of rivers on the fortunes of competing races. We hear at intervals of projects for flooding the Sahara and the rainless tracts of southern California. If that could be done, deserts would acquire a marketable value, for agriculture would thrive and every kind of prosperity spring up in its wake, and these great bare eyesores of the planet would grow green as in a magic picture. Paradise itself seems to have been made by the coil of flashing rivers that fed and fondled it.

And not less striking is the phenomenon presented by the career of that man whom the Spirit baptizes and inspires. There are souls around us so arid, scorched, and desolate that it seems almost impossible to educe within them a single grace or morality. Races are to be found—at least such is the testimony of the white men who are anxious to

supplant them—which lack the rudimentary aptitudes for virtue, humanity, religion. They have received a prodigious endowment of appetite, passion, blood-thirstiness from the beast world below them; but the spirit world above them seems to have failed to filter down into their lives a single principle of light, truth, tenderness. If there be a thoughtful veracity in Christ's promise, even these may be vitalised with a new ethic and fitted for a higher destiny than that of the dust-heap. But it must be by the Spirit in Christ's disciples. The trader who is a nominal Christian and a practical savage goes into their borders, and is an emissary of swift and complete destruction. They are touched by European commerce, and deteriorate and die off in swarms. They are forced into contact with Western civilisation, and they resent its restraints and perish from the lands of their forefathers. All these secondary influences are but as rivers of poison flowing through their borders, and a strange fate compels them to drink what they know to be the cup of death. The streams which can make this human desert, without a hint of verdure and land-marked with whitened bones, into a paradise, and keep it shaded with foliage, glorious with fruit, thick-set with holy homes and song-filled temples, must go out from the souls of men and women who have received the Holy Ghost. Those who are thus baptized have in themselves clusters of fountains from which flow welcome influences of benignity and regeneration.

A gleam of immortality seems to invest the work of the unwearied and unwasting river. This mobile thing is more lasting than the mountains, which are slowly dissolved by the weather, and as a matter of fact was excavating its appointed channels before the mountains were upheaved.

When the mightiest ranges have been ground to the level of the plains, the rivers will still flow. We are all eager to do work which shall outlast these poor bodies and be our monument in the generations that are yet to be. The work which it is our common privilege to do under the inspiration of the Spirit will have this enduring quality about it, which cannot be claimed for the best work done under inferior conditions. We owe much to the leaders of past progress, and our posterity may be placed under just as great a debt of gratitude to the reformers of to-day. The worker in every good social and national cause deserves our recognition and support; but, after all, these tasks are play and pastime in comparison with the imperishable spiritual reformations it is our high privilege to achieve. He whose life-work is energised by the Spirit of God will create vital blessing, which shall endure when those material betterments which take up so much time and thought have no more value than the sticks of last year's birds' nests. The Spirit conveys the attribute of immortality to all achievements wrought out in dependence upon His help. The influence going out from one who receives His gift and is baptized in His mystic life shall outlast the little round of the centuries. It will go to and fro like a vitalising force in the unknown places of the world, till the mountains are dissolved and the hills are no more.

This metaphor seems to speak of *the operation of a force which is universal in its range.* There shall flow from the believing disciple not such burns and streamlets and fitful torrents as just moistened the gaping lands in the little territory of the Israelites only. A country so ill-watered could not be great in natural wealth or far-reaching in material dominion. Jordan itself, wonderful as were the

scenes enacted within sound of its rushing waters, was a mere plaything, with scarcely a tributary or an offshoot, and quite unfit to set forth the cosmopolitan benignity flowing from the soul of a true Christian. The influence exerted by the believer in Jesus should be comparable to the power of the Nile, the Tigris, the Ganges, rivers which in their course to the sea become the lifeblood of matchless empires. The vitalising virtues of those baptized with Christ's promised gift operate upon a scale of inconceivable magnitude, and make vast and sublime empires of reverence, truth, righteousness, charity, brotherhood, to be one day included in the wonderful kingdom of God. Communities and nations will sometimes pay very heavy sums for a few miles of mere ditch. He who could give a new river of first-class size to the world would outmatch all statesmen and diplomatists, and sensibly change the balance of power. Political life appeals strongly to the imagination of our times, and men sometimes think they can accomplish in the House of Commons far more than they can accomplish in the Church. Our godly representatives are a mercy from the hand of Providence, for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful; yet the statesman who, as a statesman pure and simple, carries through a most beneficent reform, does but found a village pump to satisfy the thirsts of a few; and the pump is sure to rust and get out of order every decade, and need not a few legislative amendments and repairs. He who through faith in Christ receives the Holy Ghost, and then spends his life as the Spirit wills, gives new rivers to the world. "I will be as the dew unto Israel," said the Lord by the mouth of His prophet. The believing disciple is a channel into which the precious and copious dews of God gather, and he is permitted to be a fellow-labourer with God

in contributing elements of beauty, fragrance, strength to the life of mankind.

Rivers, to which Christ likens the moral forces issuing from believing disciples, are expressive *types of persistent and victorious movement.* In carving out its own destiny, the river, like the projector of mountain-tunnel or ship-canal, has to face every conceivable kind of condition. At times the work is easy, and daily progress can be noted. Now it is arduous, and a little section of it may demand years of labour. The stream that bubbles up on the mountain side often finds a pathway prepared for it by the artillery of the avalanche. At first it flows through peaty foot-hills, and to delve out for itself a snug channel there is mere byplay. Again it rushes with a glad song through the gravels of the valley and over the even bed of old lakes: but a barrier of piled up rock is reached at last, possibly the unwelcome legacy of a wasted glacier, and its career seems fated to come to an untimely end. All progress is arrested. And yet the silent volume grows day after day and week after week, till at last the obstructing barrier is overleaped or torn down, and the young river races towards its goal with more swiftness than ever. After a further interval it may have to excavate its bed in the chalk or the hard granite, and that slow process takes up centuries. No resistance can turn it back to its starting-point. By quiet, persistent, ever-growing force it prevails and reaches the vast districts it is to turn into the garden of the Lord.

And the influence of those baptized with the Spirit is just like that. Some of God's servants seem to prosper at once in their work, for they are sent to impulsive, impressionable natures, or their lot is cast in a time when genuine evangelism is just coming into popular favour.

Other men, just as richly baptized with the Spirit, let us hope, seem to produce effects very slowly. Perhaps special obstacles may dam up the outflow of these vitalising influences for a decade, and forms of unbelief difficult to deal with may thrust themselves like a grim rampart of rock right across the pathway. It may be we are now passing through one of these peculiarly discouraging periods. Religion must be very fashionable, very lukewarm, dirt-cheap, if some people in the upper middles are to have any dealings with it, and very voluble, demagogic, and anecdotal, if the masses are to be drawn towards it. For the moment the tide of revival may seem to have been turned back, and we can catch few signs of the on-moving power of regeneration in the truth to which we testify. But the river will by and by overflow the rampart. It is a question of time only, not a question of "to be or not to be." And the same fact has its aggregate illustrations. Some races are won at once to a holier faith and civilisation. Other races, represented by the impassive and imperturbable Oriental, are far harder than chalk or sandstone, and may well be likened to the granite, for they can only be impressed after generations of sacrifice and testimony. These rivers of influence starting from Christ's believing disciples have to eat their way through formations of iron rock before they can reach the goal of their fertilising destiny. But, however unequal the conditions of the work in different latitudes, these divine streams will overvault obstructions, and disintegrate obduracies, and in the end gloriously subjugate all prejudices and animosities. It is said that the Welsh hills are older than the Alps, and were once far higher. They have been worn down to mere stumps by the action of rain and torrent and stream. Such is the power and persistence of running

water. And the mountains that confront the Christian Church in its work shall give way before those living influences which God shall send forth upon the world through His believing people if they are but faithful to their trust. The moral forces springing from every disciple of Jesus Christ who receives the Spirit are charged with destinies of blessing which are illimitable.

This description of the benign and irrepressibly expansive virtue of true faith in Christ *scarcely seems like a sober picture of fact*, even when we bring ourselves most closely to Christ's conditions. But the question is, Do we meet Christ's terms, if we are found judging by outward appearances at all? In spite of many things calculated to provoke our doubt, we must have faith in Christ's promise and testimony. The teacher of the young sometimes comes to his work with a sure earnest of blessing in his soul. He has prayed much, and has been able to sensibly grasp the God who has come near to visit His heritage with abundant rain. The first drops fall, as he believes, and his own life is replenished. But he goes forth to find the children listless, full of cricket and football, and taking no pains to conceal their wish that the Sunday were over, or crazy upon the subject of dress, pleasure, entertainments. No divine influence seems to pass from his soul to theirs. How often does the mission worker go to his constituency feeling that he has faith, that God will prosper him, and send the thrill of regenerative force through his word into the souls of the sinful! But there is apathy, jesting, preoccupation with sordid things, and the life-giving streams seem to have lost themselves in the sands of the desert. The preacher feels God has heard his prayer, and will make the delivery of his message eventful; but the message

turns out to be struggling feebleness. The young are occupied with their little romances of courtship and marriage, business men with wondering when things will take a turn for the better, and the mothers of households with fretting over the paltriest vexations; others recall the slights and annoyances of a quarter of a century, or scrutinise the telegraphic codes used in the different family pews; and nobody seems touched. The missionary by long cryings and supplications brings himself into a holy atmosphere of expectation, and has, after all, to wait through the best of his days for his first convert, who in the end gives him more pain than an empty Church roll. Such are appearances; but we must despise them. Vitalising influences cannot fail to go forth from us, and sooner or later the God-given thirsts of deathless natures shall be quenched.

Rivers sometimes vanish from the landscape, and, after flowing for miles through underground caverns, burst into the noonday again. For nearly a thousand miles one of the branches of the Nile is lost in tracts of reed and rush and tangled tropical growth. It is not easy to say where the channel lies. In Central Australia the heart-sick traveller will sometimes see flocks of wild ducks flying aimlessly over dried up river beds, and his hope of finding water be cut off again and again. But one of the cunning natives, setting to work at what he thinks a suitable spot, will dig down six or eight feet beneath the sand, and there find the lost river slowly pushing its way to the coast. Believe in the influences which course through channels your eye cannot follow. The energies of sympathy and hope and holy toil going out from us may often seem to be lavished upon barren natures; but a day will come when we shall see below the surface of things, and shall find that Christ's word was far truer than we thought.

Do we reach the standard of this brave and glorious promise? Have we had the faith which makes it a fact? Have healing and far-flowing rivers nursed themselves within our souls? Alas! have we not sometimes exerted an influence which has tended to confirm men in their spiritual barrenness, to make them less tender, less pitiful, less open to religious influences, and that too with such a promise in our hands? Let us lament those shortcomings of faith and character and service which link themselves so closely with the moral impoverishment of the world, and let us prove the practical trustworthiness of that wonderful word upon which our Master has caused us to hope.

Boys of a romanceful and imaginative turn sometimes look with intense interest upon those diagrams in the school atlas which give a bird's-eye view of the comparative length of the famous rivers of the world. What dreams of adventure and what wonderful pictures are conjured up by such names as the Amazon, the Mississippi, the Brama-putra, and the Yang-tse-Kiang! Which of these wonderful watercourses is the most essential to the life of the world? What pygmies our home rivers are in comparison! The book in which God's finger is depicting religious history is not unlike that; and the men whose life-courses shall be found to have sweetened and vivified all human societies like great and beneficent rivers, will be the men of largest faith, the men who through that faith received the most lavish and enduring endowments of spiritual power. The great missionaries of the past, the evangelists who have touched society most beneficently, have done their work, not through natural gifts and aptitudes, but through that baptism of power which descends and rests upon praying souls according to their faith.

XIV

The Spirit and Responsibility

THE SPIRIT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed ; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy money in the earth.—MATT. xxv. 24, 25.

And He gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers.—EPH. iv. 11.

IT is perhaps almost needless to point out in the present day that the old-fashioned exposition of the closely related parables of the talents and pounds is arbitrary and unsound, and that the gifts of the master to his servants do not represent natural aptitudes for usefulness. Such an interpretation could only spring up in an age when the Bible was little read, and the work of the Holy Spirit still less honoured. The parable of the pounds, in which each servant received the same sum, was popular, and indicates the common grace of the Spirit bestowed upon all men so that they may work out their salvation. The special adaptation of the parable to the apostles in which the servants are made to receive varying numbers of talents, represents the peculiar gifts bestowed by the Spirit upon the twelve for the fulfilment of their official tasks. The question of mental aptitudes and qualifications scarcely comes under consideration at all. This allocation of treasure was made by one who was about to go for a time into a far country to receive a kingdom, which

obviously points to Christ's retirement from the sphere of His earthly sojourn, and return to the presence of the Father, whence He shall at last come once more to judge His household. The gift of the Spirit is the only event which suits this special occasion, for the departure was signalised by no new out-flowering of intellectual activity amongst Christ's servants such as we signify by the Augustan, the Elizabethan, or the Victorian eras. The trust conferred at this juncture was not one of natural, but purely spiritual endowments. The gift of the Holy Ghost conveyed new power and opportunity to the disciples, and raised their responsibility to a new pitch of solemnity and importance. The slothful servant was one who denied responsibility, or argued from the past strictness of the master's demand that servants might be held responsible for far too much.

Every form of power implies an equivalent responsibility. The Pentecostal gifts foreshadowed in these parables are gifts which all called by Christ's name possess, or at least virtually possess through the Master's farewell pledges, and that for all purposes of judgment is the same as direct and actual possession. An unrealised covenant promise is simply a laid up pound or a buried talent. It is ours as far as Christ's love and fidelity can make it so. For practical purposes, the man who carries with him a letter of credit signed by a banker whose name is above suspicion has money in his pocket to the full amount specified on the document. Should some creditor sue him at law, the letter of credit will be treated as one of his assets, and the concealment of it looked upon as dishonesty. If the man is too lazy to present the letter, and get it honoured, he must of course take the consequences. These promises of the Spirit in all the graces of His enrichment, which are

the birthright of those who bear the Christian name, will be treated as one of the obligations of which we must give account in the day of reckoning; and to possess our Master's guarantee brings with it the same responsibility as to possess the power specified in that guarantee.

Now there can be no responsibility where the fitness to meet the high demand of our Lord is wanting. My capacity in spiritual things must be measured by God's promise to me, and my capacity and my accountability to God are exactly of the same dimensions. The service for which the righteous God will press is determined by the inspirations which God has lodged within range of my apprehension. It is neither more nor less. The complaint of this unprofitable servant ran in the teeth of this principle. He asserted that there was a grave and habitual disparity between demand and reasonable possibility. The lord came down upon his servants from time to time with claims out of all proportion to the power he gave them. He expected munificent returns from the employment of inadequate capital. The grace imparted to equip and foster men fell absurdly short of the stringencies of his household law. It was his habit to be exacting, to insist upon loftier things from his servants than he had empowered them to achieve. "He reaped where he had not sown."

A moment's reflection will serve to show that Christ is here portraying *a man who is fatalistic in his views of the government of God and the possibilities of human life.* The servant professes that the course he had taken was determined by a deliberate estimate of his master's character. The master, on the other hand, asserts that the servant was an unscrupulous lazybones, and that his opinions were the

outgrowth of his miserable temper and habit of life. And here the old question confronts us again—Which came first, conduct or theology? Does his fatalism make him slothful? or is it his ingrained slothfulness which lands him in fatalism? Doubtless the two things were reciprocal in their influence; but if we accept the Master's clear and deep analysis of the case, we shall see that indolence rooted itself in his soul and life first, and was afterwards formulated into a perverted view of God and His government. It is obvious three things had been at work in the man's past life, and had brought him step by step to the attitude taken up in his impious apology—*envy, indolence, self-justifying pride.*

In the first form of the parable recorded by St. Luke, where each received alike, there was little room for envy; but in the fatalist of the parable recorded by Matthew, *envy and indolence* are closely related to each other. Where God seems to impart nobler spiritual gifts to some than to others, the temptation to envy always springs up, and there is danger lest we should succumb and fall into moral paralysis. The man who receives the minimum of endowment cannot brook the idea that one of his fellow-servants seems to be thought twice, and another five times as worthy as himself. The difference put between first, second, and third seems very much like a slight, a studied announcement of the fact that the master has not full confidence in those who are about him. Such evil surmises, however, are eminently unreasonable, for the variation in gifts is not arbitrary, but determined rather by foregoing indications of which the lord had taken careful note. "Every man according to the measure of his ability." The lord did a very merciful thing in keeping the man's

responsibilities within narrow limits. The gift was exactly suited to the promise he had hitherto shown. He had himself and his frittered away past to thank for his subordinate place of privilege, and envy was entirely misplaced. Nevertheless it arose within him and contributed to his final downfall.

But before the temptation to envy had come to dominate his thought, he *had long been a vacuous dreamer* and a laggard, and these habits were continued under the new conditions in which the master had placed him. Perhaps he had other pursuits which were hostile to the graver activities incumbent upon him, for it does sometimes happen that the man who is very remiss in spiritual service is a pattern of industry in worldly things. He may have presumed, moreover, upon his master's protracted absence, and have degenerated into more unscrupulous lethargy than was possible under the master's immediate eye. The lord's searching sentence goes to the very centre of his fault. "Thou wicked and slothful servant." "Wicked" inasmuch as he postponed the master's business to his own, and now makes light of his master's fair fame to cover up years of improvidence and neglect; "slothful" because of his failure to improve this supreme opportunity which had been conferred upon him by his master's indulgence and goodwill. That is the chief clew to the man's character—criminal and damning idleness. He would not rouse himself. He admitted no urgency in the calls of duty, and excused himself upon the pretext that his master's policy, so far as he could grasp it, had often seemed harsh and inequitable. Lazy people are sometimes wonderfully independent. It was surely within his right to decline the use of the master's money if he thought well. He was not bound to venture

upon some new branch of business, or waylay the foreign caravans passing through Jericho and Capernaum to see if he could buy and sell to advantage, or race himself out of breath by flying from Dan to Beersheba to see if he could find sound and profitable investments for his master's capital. He liked his home and bed too well for that. Sloth was his ruling passion, stronger even than avarice.

And at last *the temper of self-righteousness*, long latent, breaks fiercely out, for the least scrupulous are often the most zealous in vindicating themselves. He has done nothing through these years of his master's absence, and is far behind in the race of enterprise. The success and prosperity of his fellow-servants perhaps filled him with intolerable rage and shame, and to screen himself he must now blaspheme his considerate and open-handed lord. Perhaps this view of the master's character to which he here commits himself may have been slowly taking shape within his mind through the years of absence. Some seed of animosity, it may be, has come down from far off days. With the flight of the seasons he grows increasingly sceptical about the fine equities of the administration under which he is placed. He cannot maintain his self-complacency without taking up some such position. And now, when the call of the master has come to shake him out of his dreams, despair makes him bold, and the languid disaffection of the past blazes out into blustering insult. But his distrust of his own power to satisfy his lord and his impeachment of the reasonableness of his dealings was an after-thought. It was the temper of indolence united to pride which had led him at last into this outbreak of reviling fatalism.

Here then we have *the life-history of the fatalistic spirit.* Moral lethargy is its starting-point, and slander of the

just and holy Judge of all the earth its goal. Carelessness and religious neglect in the long run are bound to have this terrible development. The man who does not prove his own power in spiritual things is always ready to say that the Christian religion makes too large a demand upon the qualities of the human heart, and allows too little for human infirmities. It is fitted, as one has said, only to the elect few who have an aptitude for uncommon saintship. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred are incapable of all that which Christ's teaching claims from them. Perhaps at the outset we put the blame upon theologians who represent God, rather than upon God Himself, and assume the theologians must be wrong. It is enough if we are decent decalogue moralists, and the Master will not be so very hard upon us for our remissness in the higher exercises of the spiritual life after all. But just so surely as we live below the standard of our privilege, and are indisposed to take blame upon ourselves, will our course of life land us in this fatalistic position, whenever judgment is in the air.

The lord's judgment brands the creed of this wicked and slothful servant as a horrible and insulting lie with which the man seeks to cover up his own flagitious shortcoming and neglect, and reasserts the rigid justice of all the divine dealings with us. Our Master never "reaps where He does not sow." The trust of the talent was the lord's sufficient justification, and the fact that he did not reproach the servant who gained two talents for the failure to gain five, like his more richly endowed companion, proves that he is content to reap in proportion to his sowing.

The fatalistic temper is widespread as evil itself; it is man's never-failing apology for his own baseness and neglect, and showed itself in the first act of sin. Adam, after vainly

seeking to hide himself amongst the trees, tries to disavow his responsibility when brought face to face with his Judge. Forgetting the high nature with which God had gifted him, he speaks as though the divine hand itself had put some stumbling-block into his pathway, which made obedience to the law under which he was placed little less than impossible. "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat." What a paragon of loyalty I should have been if I had never slept, to find on awaking this fair temptress at my side! His ruin dated from the new relationship into which God had put him. He was a mere pawn in the hands of another, the sport of forces against which he was without defence; ignoring in all such assumptions the defence of his own power, knowledge, and experience. Aaron at the foot of the mount shows himself a true descendant of this fatalistic forefather. He hides his own part in fashioning the golden calf, and implies the formative principle of the symbolic image he had put up for worship was in the fire itself. "I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." Of course it is useless legislating against image-worship if Nature herself insists upon thrusting idols into the hands of men. The same temper is still rampant in the time of the prophets. Man is the creature of ancestry, and cannot make his own fortunes. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

And if we look into the larger world beyond, the same thing presents itself upon a yet more striking scale. With the exception of a small sect of reformed Mohammedans in Persia, who hold the proper freedom of the human will, every non-Christian religion and philosophy is fatalistic. Eastern pantheism can find no room for the finite will in

its theory of the universe, and ascribes every act of foulness and cruelty to the decree of the Infinite. The Confucianist asserts that the superstructure of his government and social life is designed by Heaven, and has upon every part of it the stamp of divine authority. It is useless to preach against vice and crime, because pirate and prostitute are just as much ordained to the place they fill in life as sage and emperor. And the unbelieving evolutionist in our own midst is always a necessarian. Man, he declares, is the product of antecedent conditions and contemporary environment, and is as helpless against the overpowering impulses he feels as the midge in the Niagara whirlpools against the portentous rush of waters from above. Some social reformers preach that bad morals are the result of blundering government, disjointed civilisations, the lack of right education; and although perhaps they do not put responsibility entirely outside the bounds of human life, they make it collective rather than personal.

In the practical administration of affairs we are compelled to put aside abstract theories and treat man as responsible. Common sense saves us from these religions, philosophies, and false forms of science which deny responsibility, and compels us to recognise the universality of moral freedom in men, with all those gifts of power and discernment it implies. To suffer through a big bank or building society failure is generally an effectual cure for this disbelief of human responsibility. The offender is always a necessarian, and could not well help himself, whilst the victim is always a free-willer, and feels how just it is that the offender should be punished; third parties take one side or other according to the whim of the moment. The world could not be worked upon any other

theory than that of human responsibility. Men *can* control their actions. Even in asylums for the insane the doctrine of responsibility is insisted upon within certain limits, although its range is not quite so wide as amongst sane people. There are comparatively few moral transgressors upon whom we should look as entirely diseased and quite incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong. Well, if that be so in common things, when natural intelligence, the sense of right and wrong, and the pressure of public opinion only are brought into account, must not responsibility become an immeasurably graver thing when we remember that all the gifts of the Spirit are brought near to men for their instruction, quickening, and succour in every duty and service of the daily life? If we want to realise what our responsibility is from the Christian standpoint, we must think of the normal degree of responsibility in average men and women who have not special Christian help and privilege, and multiply that a hundredfold. The Master's distribution of His enabling gifts is so bountiful and complete that morally all things are possible to us, and His sternest demands do not overpass what is due from us who have been enriched by the Spirit.

The gift of pound or talent, representing as it does the bestowment of God's Spirit to those who are servants in His household, implies a common fitness or equipment for the life of faith required from us. *The question of religious belief is often looked at from a fatalistic standpoint.* It is argued that religion is a sentiment produced by those circumstances into which a man is thrust by his destiny, and that there is no free moral quality in it whatever. It may take its special form from peculiarity of blood or brain, of soil or clime. Some men are born with an

inclination to believe everything, and some with an inclination to doubt everything upon the same extensive scale. He who has been bred in an atmosphere of superstition will be superstitious, and he who has been bred in an atmosphere of pure science will be a sceptic on spiritual questions, or at least hold his judgment in suspense. The creed is just as little under control as the complexion or the stature. It would be incredibly harsh in the Judge of mankind to make that which is imprinted upon a man from without a factor in settling his lot after death. We cannot command the faculty of belief, and He whose prerogative it is to reveal will scarcely punish men for those spiritual deficiencies which He has never gone out of His way to repair. Is a man to be thrust into hell or welcomed into heaven because of the theories of God and redemption and the future life he may have chanced to reject or to hold? And judgment of that type is attributed to the God of the dogmas. That surely would be "to reap where He had not first sown."

But faith is not a question of blood, climate, logic and training, or intellectual idiosyncrasy. It is contained in the Spirit which was Christ's parting gift to the disciples and to us; and for the improvement of that gift, which may be stated as a gift of faith, we are justly held accountable. The lord and his servants were each parties to the transactions of the parable before us, and God and man are equally concerned in the rise and development of religious faith within us. It was the lord's to give pound or talent, and the servants' to multiply what was given by diligent and conscientious use.

And the application of this part of the analogy is obvious. Can we ever be sure that upon any of our fellow-men no

capacity for faith has been bestowed, and that the Church in teaching the duty of faith is asking in the name of Christianity for a harvest where there has been no seed corn? Is it not quite as probable that there may have been neglect of an elementary spiritual gift, rather than that the conditions for the production of faith are wanting? It is true men do not possess faith in the same degree of progressive unfoldment and maturity; but the pound, the minimum of belief necessary in working out salvation, is within reach of all. In many, whose lives are frankly opened to our study, can we not detect the clear neglect of a moral trust or stewardship? Faith, they insist, must be reached by scientific experiment; and metaphysic, by which term all the phenomena of the religious consciousness are denoted, is roundly denounced from the housetops. The servant might as well have said he had received no trust, because he could not pick up shekels and talents and pounds in all the fields and farm buildings of his master's estate. Of course it was to the master's strong-room he must go for his money, and that must be where every servant to-day must get the capital which represents faith and the precious things issuing from faith. God gives to all men something which will turn into faith and the priceless qualities faith begets, if they will but use it.

But we cannot judge others. Let us rather deal closely with ourselves. Do we not under-estimate our power of answering to the demand which Christ makes upon us by the exercise of a reasonable faith? Candour must surely compel us to admit that if the gift of spiritual vision and insight were within our reach, it would be obscured by the many things occupying us which are contrary to the will of the Spirit? This deepening unbelief takes its rise in habits

of thought and feeling to which the leanings of the flesh have largely contributed. Few of us can perhaps claim that we have reached agnostic conclusions in a sphere of pure reason from which every throb of passion has been shut out. If we are not responsible for the last step which landed us in a paralysing religious scepticism, are we not responsible for some of the preceding steps? Have we lived in spheres of thought and feeling congenial to Him who testifies of Christ, and found that He has left the soul a cold, cruel vacancy? Have we cast out all the tempers which repel the Spirit from His human habitations? Does He keep Himself out? or do we lock our natures against Him? It matters little how few and crude our beliefs are, if we are only feeling our responsibility for belief and bringing all the powers of the soul into play. The one principle shall become two, and the two five, and the five ten, and we shall rejoice at last in "the riches of the full assurance of knowledge."

We may settle it in our heart that God will never demand more faith from us than He has made practicable by His word and inward illumination; but He will demand no less. Of course He will not insist upon the same measure of faith from every man; but He will look for faith in some degree from all who possess the promise of the Spirit. He is not capricious and austere; but He is immovably just. He is no exaggerated sentimentalist, full of imbecile leniences, which is the slothful servant's ideal of what a master should be. He will ask again the capital entrusted to us, and reasonable interest on the capital. Our responsibility is measured not by the belief which we happen to possess at the present moment, but by the belief the Spirit is competent to awaken and maintain within us if we daily submit ourselves to His sacred ministries. The talent is a

wonderful thing, with a strange power of self-multiplication when it gets into diligent hands. Perhaps we seem to have less faith than that with which we started out in life. We have done worse even than the slothful servant, and have been moral spendthrifts. The talent has strangely dwindled into shekels, the shekels into pounds, the pounds into pence. We shall yet have to reckon in these subtle things with the clear, strong justice of God's government. He never reaps where He does not sow, and His claims have never the least suspicion of exorbitancy about them. On the other hand, He will hold us responsible for the apprehension of just as much truth as the Spirit of truth can enable lowly, docile, praying hearts to receive.

This gift implies *the power of that new life which is made possible to us by the Spirit.* The temper of fatalism which is abroad often sets itself to talk down and fritter away the obligation resting upon us to reach the full standard of the Christian ethic. Men who would not care to entirely unchurch themselves now and again whisper that the New Testament demands are somewhat arbitrary and exaggerated. The code is too high to be practicable for the present, and too little note is taken of human passions and appetites. Elementary instincts are in us which cannot always be repressed. Unless better blood can be poured into some men's veins, and better tissues grafted upon their brains, and larger and more sanitary homes found for them, it is impossible to keep them within the four corners of the ten commandments. The stamp of depravity is on the very skulls and features of not a few of our fellows. They were born to be scamps and blackguards, and it is mockery to insist that they can be set free from the momentum of depravity imparted at their birth. And besides all that, the

power of circumstance is quite overwhelming. Great social revolutions must be brought to pass before those who are the spawn of the gutter can be moralised. Talk of this kind helps the spirit of slumber in those who, in spite of many grave drawbacks, do nevertheless sustain inevitable responsibilities, and need to be reminded of the fact. Those who thus argue lend the wicked and slothful servant a hand with pick and shovel, and help him to bury from view those subtle endowments which, after all, are the inviolable guarantees of a better life. It is a false and godless sentimentalism which is ever maundering: To do right, handicapped as you are at every turn, is hard indeed, and God will not surely carry out upon you every letter of the threatening directed against remissness and delinquency. It is unreasonable to expect you can be all the more highly privileged are, and a Judge who would inflict the full penalty for shortcoming would be despotic and overbearing. To ask from such as you a life of lofty saintliness would be to come with sickle and harvest wagon into fields upon which the husbandman had neglected to bestow the necessary seed corn.

The word of God never asserts that the range and measurement of every man's responsibility is precisely the same. Human responsibilities may again and again overlap and interlace. Not improbably some of us, in giving the account of our stewardship, may have to say things not entirely to our credit about the social conditions which seem to shut out the possibility of virtue from some lives. But these facts notwithstanding, in view of the common gift of the Spirit of teaching and renewal, a man's personal responsibility for his own wrong acts can never be reduced to the vanishing point. The things which seem adverse to

a just responsibility address the outward eye, whilst the things that constitute its essence and foundation are subtle and unseen. Pitiful social disabilities for purity and righteousness upon which we can all look cleave to many around us; but there are spiritual compensations which none of us can track or fathom. Against the most animal physique the world has in it there are inscrutable offsets. Our catholic belief in the impartial ministry of the Holy Ghost compels us to think that every passion, however terrible, finds itself matched against a transcendent spiritual impetus of unknown intensity. The endowment for entire self-conquest is within touch of every man's hand. When we get into the realm of sociology, we leave out of account Christ's gift of the Spirit, although that gift again and again verifies the sufficiency of its power against temptation, foul habit, and degrading environment. We observe the earth pull back to itself the down-rushing rain, but not always the refined vapours that are drawn back towards the sun. The sun when hidden by clouds pulls just as effectually as the earth we always see and feel. We are apt to look upon the coarse forces which are dragging man down into the brute and the demon, and to forget the high attractions which are drawing him up into the angel. If there are slums around us, noxious as the very portals of hell, the Holy Spirit comes down to cleanse and consecrate many a slum-bred soul, and to make it His holy shrine. If we count what our eyes can see, and omit those mystic operations of the Spirit which are viewless as the wind, no wonder we sometimes think that Christ demands a harvest without vouchsafing seed and a seedtime.

Men sometimes flatter themselves that they can reduce their responsibilities by declining to profess and call them-

selves Christians. They admit an obligation to practise purely natural virtues, and there they draw the line, thoughtlessly assuming that their obligations stop short of those acknowledged by men and women who vow themselves to the Christian service and know the secret of a new life. They do not commit themselves to quite so high a code as that which binds itself upon those who are regenerate. Let it not be overlooked, however, that the regenerating Spirit belongs just as much to the man who resists His ministry as to the man who knows in his own experience the deepest secret of power. The case of an unregenerate man is precisely analogous to that of the servant who buries his talent. By the use of this latent gift he can meet God's utmost requirement, and the neglect of the gift cannot possibly be looked upon as a just discharge from responsibility. The Master must look upon such a plea as a fiction which insults His tribunal.

Those upon a somewhat higher plane accept the average level of character in the Church as the practicable standard, and *view the subject of Christian holiness from a semi-fatalistic standpoint.* They make no demur at taking the ten commandments as the gauge by which to reckon their responsibilities; but they would be aghast if asked to use for the estimate of this solemn question the principles laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. Here surely we are in a realm in which we are entirely at the mercy of God's decrees. A saint who can submit to such extraordinary tests must be created by the breath of God, and not self-made and self-evolved, and it is perhaps small occasion of reproach to us if we fall short of that ideal. Of course we are grieved if we stumble into outward sin, but sins of temper trouble us very little indeed. The graces which

give the crowning glory and completeness to the Christian character are surely imparted in the exercise of a special sovereignty only. Let us prick these self-indulgent sophisms by remembering that the Judge will ask us to render up our account, not according to the average of attainment in the Church to which we belonged, but according to the measure of the Spirit's energy within us. What is He able to do for us? The demands of Christ's law and the Spirit's enabling grace exactly balance each other. If that were not so, the slothful servant would be more righteous than his lord. We shall woefully fail if we try and meet the stern demand with some fraction of the capital put into our hands, but not if we bring the grand total into play. The Master is asking a large harvest because He has sown a wonderful seed; and if our life is not what He will approve, it is because we have hidden the treasure put at our disposal.

Christ's ascension gift to His disciples brings the full assurance of faith and freedom of access to God within common reach, but do we not sometimes take *fatalistic views of these peculiar privileges of the believer?* A man may be responsible for many things in his creed and for the ruling moral qualities in his daily actions; but this realm of mysterious life and sensibility is surely one in which the finite will can take no part. Here surely the Comforter must be suffered to act alone. Can a man light up his own soul with a radiance from beyond the stars? Can he put himself into God's family side by side with the sons of light? Can he command the absolution of peace, that he should be blamed if he walk in darkness and have no light? Is it not a counsel of perfection to say, "Rejoice always"? That is the voice of an austere and unreasonable Master

again. We all bow in reverence before the divine sovereignty; but the sovereignty is not that of whimsicality and caprice, putting one man under the direct smile of God and leaving another in the dungeon, and creating endless anomalies of spiritual administration. The Comforter is with us, and we are susceptible of receiving His gift, and the command "Rejoice" means, Let the seed that is in you spring forth. The voice does not ask from us a harvest out of proportion to the trust of privilege we receive. Into all acceptable service joy must enter, and the gift is within us, and we are responsible for its use. The disciple who is not the possessor of a conscious salvation, and free to enter boldly into the holy place, is in danger of incurring the guilt attaching to the servant who hid his lord's money in the earth.

The gift of the Spirit implies *a qualification for benign and useful service.* And here, again, are we not in danger of allowing the fatalistic temper to shape and rule our views of success in spiritual things? Results, we say, must be left to God, and the measure of prosperity attending a Christian's work is not proportioned, as far as we can see at least, to his fidelity or diligence. The thirty, sixty, or hundredfold increase which rewards our toil is fixed in a realm of providential sovereignty which is strictly independent of our influence. The cumulative forces of zeal, earnestness, sacrifice, faith, count for little, and do not appreciably affect the sum total of success vouchsafed. Success is dealt out according to the inscrutable counsels of the Most High, and to our view there seem strange and arbitrary elements in those counsels. Sincerity, self-effacement, soul-passion, the trustfulness which is long tried and unwavering, are passed by, and glorious and inexplicable reaping comes to men in

whom these things, if not lacking, are present in only insignificant degrees. The lavish ingathering is permitted to some men who do not sow, and others sow to the very end and see no fruit.

It may be that we sometimes doubt the even-handedness of God in the bestowment of success upon His servants, because it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to say what success is. It cannot be gauged like the rainfall and the sunshine, and is far too subtle to be tabulated in the revival column of a religious newspaper. But success, as God accounts it, goes by constant and unerring laws. We cannot trace at present their ranges and ramifications, for to do so we should need to have before us the unwritten chapters of the coming eternities, and to find their many secrets at our finger-tips. Every man will find in the end that the precise amount of success rewards his service for which he laid himself out. It is idle to argue about God's sovereignty. He fixes the disbursement. But each man determines the increase of that which has been put into his own hands, so far at least as it is not anticipated in the disbursement. It ought to encourage us that Christ found no place in these two parables for the man who tried and failed. We reserve large places in our schemes for men of that sort, unsuccessful men who deserve our sympathy and have every reason for complaint; but our schemes rest upon false and unspiritual surveys of the facts.

We have been slack-handed and faithless hitherto. Let us cease our flimsy self-justifications and cling to the honour of our Lord. If things are not all they might be, never let us impugn the economies under which we are placed. We have received gifts which make us accountable for our own salvation, and in some degree for the salvation

of others. He has given us adequate seed for the harvest, working capital commensurate with the increment He expects. We are ready enough to uphold the doctrine of responsibility where our own interests are at stake. There is not one man in a hundred we should treat as irresponsible, however base his birth, bad his face, and foul his upbringing, if he had stolen half our income or insulted our children. There is not one man in a hundred we should hold as irresponsible if we had paid him for professional services, and he had blundered our affairs more egregiously than a mere crossing-sweeper could. All governments, all societies, all households hold their subjects and their members responsible for sane and virtuous conduct. Do not let us assume that God's claims can be put upon a lower level. His sense of our responsibility is far stronger than the estimate we form of each other's, for he has watched those countless streams of stimulating influence that have never ceased to pour themselves into our natures. The Searcher of hearts, who knows the wealth of light, the power of inward purification, and the endowment for fruitful service made available by the Spirit who broods year after year in our dull hearts, can alone measure our responsibility. It is greater than we know, and yet God in His largest demand never runs the risk of making Himself an exactor. His most urgent calls are not in excess of the Pentecostal grace.

The tendency of all godless thought is to ignore this solemn burden put upon us by the Master's hand, and the object of all preaching is to counteract the current godlessness, to put back responsibility upon the individual, to strip the wrappings from the hidden pound, to tear the soil from the buried talent, and to restore the master's money to the hands for which it is designated. Our responsi-

bilities are coextensive with the privileges we have been contemplating, and we must thoughtfully and prayerfully accept and acknowledge them. The gift puts us into an entirely new relation to God and the universe, and binds up to some extent the destinies of many with our own. Are we ready to say the burden must surely crush us? We even now feel ourselves beginning to stagger beneath its strange and awful weight. That is the very condition of mind to which God wants to bring us, for we shall never cast ourselves upon His sufficiency whilst we feel our burden of responsibility is so light that we can carry it ourselves. He has so made us that we must lean every moment upon the infinite strength and tenderness of the Spirit, and the responsibilities He has prepared for us are not less grave and numerous than will be found necessary to constrain us to habits of dependence. The talent may have hitherto been buried, but the Lord is not yet come, and our opportunity, though narrowed by the neglect of the past, is not finally gone. Let us stir up the gift that is in us, and let us not fail to remember our marvellous privileges and no less far-reaching responsibilities each time we repeat the catholic confession, "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

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